HOURS BEFORE THE ALTAR.



HOURS BEFORE THE ALTAR;

OR,

MEDITATIONS

ON THE

HOLY EUCHARIST.

BY

M. L'ABBE DE LA BOUILLERIE.

VICAR-GENERAL OF PARIS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

BY A RELIGIOUS

OF THE ORDER OF THE VISITATION.

Permissu Superiorum.

LONDON:
RICHARDSON AND SON, 147, STRAND;
9, CAPEL STREET, DUBLIN, AND DERBY.

APPROBATION.

We have ourselves read with lively interest a work entitled: "Meditations on the Eucharist," by the Abbé de la Bouillerie. This book is well adapted to aid pious souls to nourish in their hearts sentiments of a sweet and tender devotion towards the most holy Sacrament of the Altar. On this ground we take great pleasure in recommending it to the faithful of our diocese, who, according to our desire, hasten in crowds to visit our Lord in the sanctuaries appointed for the prayers of the Forty Hours.

✠ MARIE DOMINIQUE AUGUSTE,

Archbishop of Paris.

Paris, 15 Dec., 1851.

TO THE

ASSOCIATES OF THE NIGHTLY ADORATION OF THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT.

To you I dedicate this little book, and this dedication is your due by every title.

And then to you belongs the first thought of these meditations, since in writing them I have only given a new form to the instructions I have been accustomed to address you every month, in the pious reunions we all love to remember. In the second place, it is to your desires I have yielded in reproducing the words that escaped spontaneously from my lips, and that I wished to confide only to the keeping and memory of your hearts. It is, too, by the aid of the faithful notes, which several among you have remitted to me,

that I have been able to satisfy your wishes. Finally, whether in speaking or writing, it is you always that I have had in view, and the interest of your souls, which are so dear to me.

I have proposed to myself a double end in the composition of this little book. I have wished, first, to propose to you twelve subjects of meditation, corresponding to the twelve hours of the night that you consecrate every year to the Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament. And I would also suggest to you a method and some examples, however imperfect, to teach you to meditate yourselves on this sweet mystery. You will observe that the texts which I have cited refer generally, in a very indirect manner, to the Divine Eucharist; but, filled with the thought of the Eucharist, and having it constantly before my eyes, I have easily brought the subjects I have chosen to bear upon it. I could desire that you too should form the habit oi finding the Eucharist in all your pious readings, particularly those of the Holy Scripture. I could wish that the Eucharist were so always at the entrance

of your mind, that you may think of it before all, and at the occupation of your heart, that you may love it above all things.

Though these meditations are dedicated to you, they, nevertheless, are not written for you alone. They are addressed to all pious souls, to all those who have tasted how sweet the Lord is in the Sacrament of the Altar.

I know that those souls who love the Eucharist will love my book, because they will find in it their own sentiments: doubtless, God has often inspired them as good, or better, than mine. I am, assuredly, far from having succeeded in this labour according to the extent of my desires. I could have wished, above all, that my language, the better to express the ineffable sweetness of the mystery of which I treat, should imitate more nearly that of the great and pious doctor,* whose eloquence the Church compares to honey, and whose works I have so often read for you with delight. Alas! I can only drag myself after him, when I would wish to run in

* St. Bernard.

the odor of his perfumes.* But I shall esteem myself happy if these little meditations become for you the motive of some acts of love to the Most Blessed Sacrament, and if they are in your nightly adorations like those feeble lamps suspended before our sanctuaries, which give light enough to guide our steps to the tabernacle, but not enough to diminish the charm of its mysterious darkness, coming thus as an aid to prayer, but without taking from it its recollection.

* Cant. i. 4.

CONTENTS.

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

NINTH MEDITATION.

TENTH MEDITATION.

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

HOURS BEFORE THE ALTAR.

THE SLEEP OF THE EUCHARIST.

Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat.
I sleep, and my heart watches.—*Cant.* v. 2.

I.

Let us listen while the Spouse of the holy canticles addresses us these sweet words, and endeavour to comprehend them:

"I sleep," does He say, "and my heart watches."

Ah! if He had stopped at this one word *I sleep*, far from tasting therein the suavity, that I seek, I should find only disquietude and alarm. Jesus Christ sleeps, and the devil, my enemy, watches and prowls around me like a lion to devour me.* Jesus Christ sleeps, and my senses, constantly awake, lie in ambush for my soul to enslave it. Jesus Christ sleeps, who will watch for

* 1 Pet. v. 8.

me? My love sleeps, on whom shall I rely? My strength sleeps, who will support me? My hope sleeps, in whom shall I trust? . . . . But He who is, at once, my love, my hope, my strength, leaves me not long in suspense. I sleep, says He, but my heart watches; and, lo! I am at once reassured. It is no heavy slumber which leaves the heart to watch; it is not a sleep of forgetfulness when the heart keeps vigil. If His heart watches, then He will love me; if His heart watches, then He will come to my aid. His heart will always find secret words to instruct me, and secret delights to charm me; what matters it that all in Him sleeps, if His heart watches? His heart is all. Sleep, Lord Jesus, I am tranquil, Thy heart watches.

II.

But let us endeavour to penetrate the mystery contained in this sentence; and since the Spouse therein reveals to us two things—that He sleeps, and that His heart watches—let us seek to know how He sleeps, while His heart does not.

Ah! if with attention I meditate on Jesus Christ, His eternal existence in the bosom of His Father, His birth among us, His life, His death, but, above all, His Divine Eucharist, everywhere my thought returns to these words, *I sleep, and my heart watches.* It explains to me Jesus Christ entirely.

Let us consider the Divine Word hidden in the bosom of His Father before the creation of the world. There He remains from eternity, and what does He do? Might we not say that He sleeps with an eternal slumber? At least it seems to be a sleep with regard to the world which is not created, and man who does not exist. It is only later that He will leave the highest Heavens, as the Spouse, the nuptial-chamber,* and that, clearing the space that separates us from Him, the day-star from on high shall visit us.† But while He remains in the bosom of His Father, it is for His Father He seems to live, and for the Holy Ghost who unites them both. For us He remains inactive, for us He slept during a whole eternity.

* Psalm xviii. 6. † Luke i. 78.

Ah! never let us speak thus: these words would be blasphemies. When I slept in the bosom of my Father, answers the eternal Word, already my heart watched over you—*ego dormio et cor meum vigilat.* His heart kept vigil over us; and has He not Himself been careful to tell us so, by the mouth of His prophet? "I have loved you with an eternal love."* What is this but to say, from all eternity, my heart watched for you and over you?

Yes, from all eternity He had adopted us for His children. Yes, from all eternity He had counted all our steps, and chosen the angel who was to guard us, lest at any time we dash our foot against a stone.† Yes, from all eternity He had known our miseries, and He had designed the voice and heart that should relieve them. Yes, from all eternity He had known our faults, and He had chosen the priest whose hand should be lifted over us to forgive them. Ah! then from all eternity could He not say to us, I sleep, and my heart watches—*ego dormio et cor meum vigilat?*

* Jeremiah xxxi. 3. † Luke iv. 10, 11.

In the fulness of time the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us. He was born in a poor stable; behold Him an infant asleep in the bosom of His Mother. Scarcely a motion announces life, scarcely a sigh, a tear; His eyes, instead of unclosing to rest upon me, are shut; His arms, instead of being stretched to meet me, are clinging round the neck of His Mother; His feet, instead of running to welcome me, are wrapped in swaddling-clothes. And I say to myself, What! He is come to save Israel, and He sleeps!...I sleep, replies the Infant, but fear not, my heart watches—*ego dormio et cor meum vigilat.*

His heart watches. Oh! yes, for already what love in this little child, what love in this humiliation, what love in this Mother, who is to be ours, what love in this crib, in this first sigh, this first tear! Already His heart which watches has gathered around Him the rich and the poor, the great and the lowly. The voice of the angels which calls the shepherds, is His heart which watches and says to them, Peace to men

of good will.* The star that conducts the magi is His heart which watches and guides them.

Jesus Christ passes the first thirty years of His life in the solitude of Nazareth; there, concealed from every eye, forgotten by men, buried in a profound humility, you might believe that this life, thus hidden and obscure, is a slumber; "I appear to you to sleep," does Jesus Christ again say to us, "but see how my heart watches. I know that obedience is repugnant to the independence of your nature, meekness and humility to the pride of your heart. It is not too much for me to pass thirty years in giving you examples of these sublime virtues; I do not sleep so profoundly that my heart does not watch to say to you, Learn of me, that I am meek and humble of heart."†

The entire life of Jesus Christ, if we run over it, will show Him to us always realizing in Himself the sentence that we meditate—I sleep, and my heart watches.

One day He embarked with His dis-

* Luke ii. 14. † Matthew xi. 29.

ciples on the lake of Genesareth, a tempest arose, the waves threaten to engulf the fragile vessel: But says the evangelist, He was asleep.* The terrified Apostles surround Him and waken Him, crying, "Lord, save us, we perish;" and Jesus answers, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" as if He had said, I slept, it is true, but my heart watched over you—*ego dormio et cor meum vigilat.* Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the waves, and there was a great calm.

And, in fine, when the Saviour of the world, to accomplish the will of His Father, and to finish the work of our redemption, was raised on the cross of Calvary, when extending His arms, and bowing down His head bound with thorns, He gave up the Ghost, does He not, for a last time, seem to say to us, "I sleep, and my heart watches—*ego dormio et cor meum vigilat?*" I die on the cross, but this death is a slumber which reaches not my heart; I abandon this life, but my paternal heart does not leave you orphans;† I close my eyes to

* Matt. viii. 24. † John xiv. 18.

earthly light, but my heart regards and contemplates you with love; all my bones are dislocated, my members transpierced; a lance opens my heart, but from this heart thus opened, and which watches always, gush forth for you two fruitful fountains, water and blood, baptism and the Eucharist.

III.

The Eucharist! Ah! it is the Eucharist principally that our meditations have in view, and behold, we have reached the beloved term of our thoughts.

If it has been sweet to follow Jesus Christ from heaven to Calvary in these simple and consoling words, "I sleep, but my heart watches," it is because these words, above all, have appeared to be the amiable device of the Eucharist. Let us draw near to the Tabernacle and the Altar; let us contemplate Jesus Christ under the Eucharistic veils. What annihilation! what uninterrupted silence! what profound slumber! Be not deceived, does He say to us. The more I annihilate myself, the more I love you; the greater my silence, the

more I listen to your voice; the more I conceal myself under these veils, the more I discover myself to you; the more I seem to sleep, the more I watch: *ego dormio et cor meum vigilat.*

Oh! men, whoever you are, how great soever may be your desolation and your misery, your anxieties or your pains, your infidelities and your faults, in the presence of the Altar and the Eucharist, be consoled; bc calmed; be reassured. In the Tabernacle Jesus Christ sleeps. He sleeps, that this lowly slumber may soothe the terror that His majesty would excite; and in the Tabernacle the heart of Jesus watches, that this vigil may give you confidence. The Eucharist is a slumber. Weak, unhappy, sinful though you be, fear not, the Eucharist is the heart of God which watches.

Feeble creatures, here is your strength afflicted souls, here is your joy; poor sinners, here is your salvation.

IV.

Thus the heart of Jesus takes neither repose nor slumber. Its love excites it, and makes it act. It watches incessantly

over my dearest interests; it watches over my mind to enlighten it; over my heart to inflame it with His pure love; over my senses to calm them: it watches over my thoughts to direct them; over my least actions to ennoble them; over my life to render it divine. What a consolation for me, but at the same time what a useful lesson! Between my heart and that of Jesus Christ, behold the difference: when Jesus Christ seems to sleep, His heart watches; while I sleep, but my heart keeps no vigil. I sleep in the forgetfulness of my duties; I sleep in tepidity, in indifference; and this slumber is that of the heart. All my senses are awake, my passion are active, my mind often anxious and agitated. Alas! it is only my heart that sleeps! Ah! let it no longer be thus! Oh, my God! rather let all in me sleep save my heart, for it is the heart principally that Thou regardest—*Dominus intuetur cor.**

Dust and ashes that I am, knowing by a sad experience my imperfection and my misery, I am not astonished if sometimes I sleep, but at least, Lord, let me love

* 1 Kings xvi. 7.

Thee: let me love Thee ardently; let me love Thee sovereignly, so that, full of confidence in Thy goodness, I also may say, I sleep, but my heart watches—*ego dormio et cor meum vigilat.*

May I thus, my God, pass on through life, loving Thee with my heart, adoring Thee with my heart, serving Thee with my heart, that in the day on which Thou shalt call me to Thee, when about to breathe my last sigh, my last word may be, "I am now going to sleep the slumber of death, but all within me shall not sleep, for my heart watches. It shall watch near Thee and in Thee during a blessed eternity. Amen."

THE DIVINE FIELD OF THE EUCHARIST.

Audi, filia, ne vadas in alterum agrum ad colligendum.

Hear me, daughter; do not go to glean in any other field.—*Ruth* ii. 8.

I.

One of the most agreeable images the holy writings present to us, is that of Ruth, whose history forms the subject of one of the books of the Old Testament.

Ruth, after the death of her first spouse, abandons her family and her country to attach herself to Naomi, her mother-in-law, and to the true God. She returns with Naomi to dwell in the land of Judah, and there, to provide for the necessities of her to whom she has devoted herself, she disdains not to go glean in the fields of the rich Booz. He, by a divine instinct, distinguishes her immediately gleaning timidly after the harvesters. With exquisite delicacy he commands his reapers to leave a rich gleaning for the hands of Ruth. Soon he desires her to take her place among them, and share their wages.

This is not all. Divine Providence makes him discover in Ruth her who, according to the laws of his country, should become his spouse. He unites himself to her, and this sacred union becomes the source whence issues, after three generations, the prophet-king David.

This touching episode, considered only in its historical truth, possesses a lively interest, and offers us useful lessons. We admire the piety of Naomi, the vir-

tue of Ruth, the generous hospitality of Booz, and more than all this, the wonderful conduct of Divine Providence towards these two holy personages.

But these first considerations are not enough for our piety, and are far from exhausting the rich fund of edification and instruction that the inspired author proposes to us.

According to the doctrine of St. Paul, and the unanimous teaching of the Fathers, the entire Old Testament is only a figure of the New, and hence in the Old Testament there is not a person or a fact which is not at once a symbol and prediction referring to the New.

In this point of view the history of Ruth, itself so full of charms, becomes but the brilliant rind of a fruit we are allowed to gather.

Booz is no longer only the rich proprietor of the field where Ruth enters to glean: he is more; he is the figure of our Divine Saviour Jesus Christ, who in His gospel often compares Himself to a husbandman.

And again, it is not enough to consider in Ruth the young Moabitess, who

abandons her country to follow Naomi, her mother-in-law, into Judea. Ruth represents to us, in the first place, the entire Gentile race, abandoning its false gods, and uniting with that portion of the Jewish nation which remained faithful, to form with them only one people, and adore together the same true God. She is in the second place an image of the soul renouncing the world and its vain pleasures, that Jesus Christ may be its portion and inheritance.

But then, following this same sweet train of thought, I ask what is figured by this blessed field of Booz, where Ruth goes first as an humble gleaner, and where she reaps an ample harvest for herself and Naomi, and where she contracts with the master a union, precious in the sight of God.

Ah! when I think under what an humble form the God of the Eucharist deigns to hide Himself; when I remember that in this sacrament of love we call Him the wheat of the elect and the bread of life, I hesitate not, and under the symbol of the field of Booz, my

heart rejoices to consider the divine field of the Eucharist.

At this thought I pause, and dwelling on it, I will piously meditate on some circumstances and words of the holy history I have taken for my text.

II.

Let us remark, in the first place, that Naomi and Ruth are in poverty till the day on which the field of Booz, with its rich harvest, is opened to them. Oh! is not this first circumstance wonderfully applicable to the divine Eucharist? Doubtless this mystery does not contain the whole of Christianity; our holy religion offers us, besides it, a thousand consolations, a thousand supports, a thousand blessings; and yet, where is the pious soul who does not feel in herself that without the Eucharist, to her all is but misery? The most fertile fields could not satisfy her hunger, unless she has gleaned at least some ears in the field of the Eucharist. The most abundant springs of grace appear to her parched and dried up, compared with this; and while she is far from Thee, O

God of the Eucharist! she exclaims with David, "As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God!"*

Let us now follow the pious Ruth, when for the first time she enters the field of Booz. How timidly she advances! how shrinkingly she keeps apart from the rich harvesters that cover the plain, as if she thought herself unworthy to join them! how far is she from presuming to share their abundant harvest! But neither this humility nor this fear take from her her sweet confidence; she hopes that the Providence which clothes the lily of the fields, and nourishes the birds of heaven,† will let fall before her steps the ears of corn of which she has need. Her hope is realized, and then what is her delight! She steals hurriedly away, carrying with a holy joy the sheaf that she has formed.

Such are the sentiments of Ruth; do they not recall those which once were ours?

Ah! we also have seen the day when

* Psalm xli. 1. † Matt. vi. 6-9.

it was given us for the first time to enter the divine field of the Eucharist. We were very young then, and we advanced to the Holy Table with childlike timidity and profound humility. We followed our mothers, our more aged Christian friends, those who had initiated us in the knowledge of the divine mysteries, and whose wisdom and virtue we admired. We did not, like them, pretend to a rich harvest, gathered each day at the foot of the holy Altar, but we wished to glean at least some ears that lay in their path; we desired, like the humble Canaanite, to pick up some of the crumbs that fell from those rich tables; but yet our humility did not exclude an ardent desire and filial confidence; an ardent desire, for already we had learned to value the treasure hidden in the Eucharistic field;* a filial confidence, for it seemed to us that the divine Father of the family would not repulse us, since He had said with so much love, "Suffer little children to come unto me."† Our

* Matt. xiii 44. † Mark x. 14.

hope was not deceived. On the sacred day of our First Communion, we gleaned these ears, and what was not then our happiness! We went with tears of humility and of repentance, and we came, bearing with us this first sheaf, not in our hands, but in our hearts.*

III.

Booz was not slow to distinguish Ruth, when she entered his field, for he is a figure of the true Master, of the divine Father, of whom it is written: "Before I formed thee in the bowels of thy Mother I knew thee."† Never does He reject any one who knocks at the gate of His field;‡ and to him who gleans with courage the first ears, He promises an abundant harvest.

Let us consider the conduct of Booz with regard to Ruth, and the language he addresses her:

"Hear me, daughter; do not go to glean in any other field—*Audi, filia, ne vadas in alterum agrum colligendum.*" Then addressing himself to his har-

* Psalm cxxv. 7.

† Jer. i. 5. ‡ Matt. vii. 8.

vesters, he says, "If she would even reap with you, hinder her not, and let fall some of your handfuls on purpose, and leave them, that she may gather them without shame."

Let us rest on these words and this conduct, referring them to the subject of our Meditation.

"Hear me, daughter; go not to gather in any other field;" as if He had said, "Till now you have sought for your treasure and your happiness in other things. Cease these useless efforts; what you desire, what you love, what you seek, you will find only in the divine field of the Eucharist; there you will always find it; cease, then, to glean in any other field—*ne vadas in alterum agrum.*

Oh, how touching is this lesson! and who will give us grace to understand it?

In effect, when we enter upon life, many fields are open before us. There is, it is true, the field of the Church, where flourish the virtues of the saints, where good works bring forth their fruits, where ripen in abundance the divine ears of the Eucharist; but side

by side with this fertile field, there are those of the world, where flourish impure pleasures, and where vain honours are reaped.

Alas! foolish that we are, to them too often we direct our steps. We say, according to the expression of the divine book, "Let us crown ourselves with roses before they be withered: let no meadow escape our riot."* Ah! if at last recalled by the grace of God, conquered, perhaps, by the indigence of our hearts, we have returned to the field of the Eucharist; if already, in the joy of our soul, we have gleaned therein some first ears, let us listen to the voice of the Father who says to us, as to Ruth, My child, go not to glean in any other field—*ne vadas in alterum agrum.*

And in order that our joy may be full, our harvest abundant, He will willingly do for us what He did for Ruth. He will recommend us to His reapers, who will dispense to us with zeal the riches of their Master.

Who, then, are these reapers? I may answer, first, that they are His

* Wisdom ii. 8.

angels, for is it not on the bread of angels that man feeds in the holy Eucharist?* and are not the angels ministering spirits of the graces of God unto us? But with the angels, and even more than they, they are the priests. Yes, it is to the priests of Jesus Christ that the dispensation of this divine mystery has been confided; it is they who every day on our altars deposit in our hands the Eucharistic sheaves. Ah! from the first time that the sacramental words were pronounced, how many ears have been gathered by priestly hands, and how many have fallen from those same hands into our hearts! It is they whom the divine Master commands each day to employ their industry and their zeal, that every soul may receive the daily bread He destines for it. They prepare the divine banquet; to the wheat of the elect they join the wine which makes virgins,† and they cry with a loud voice, Come, ye friends of God, eat and drink and be inebriated—*commedite, amici, et bibite et inebriamini, carissimi.*‡

* Psalm lxxvii. 25. † Cant. v. ‡ Cant. v. 1.

IV.

The sacred writer points out to us, in the course of his recital the two precious advantages which result to the pious Ruth from the conduct she followed: first, she found in the field of Booz wherewith to provide for the necessities of herself and Naomi, and riches take the place of poverty in the house of the two poor widows. In the second place, divine Providence, which ordereth all things sweetly,* makes use of this same circumstance of the coming of Ruth into the field of Booz to prepare and cement between them a happy and blessed union.

And, here, again, how shall we keep our thoughts from affectionately reverting to the precious fruits the soul gathers from the holy Eucharist?

In the first place, the Eucharist is the wealth of the soul. If our soul be deprived of this heavenly bread, she is poor; with it she possesses every thing, without it she is weak, and with it she becomes powerful. Oh! give me a soul who

* Wisdom viii. 1.

has loved and tasted the Eucharist; she will understand all my words, she will understand that there is indeed a treasure hidden in the field of Booz, and that this treasure is the Eucharist.

But while it is our riches, it becomes the means and pledge of our eternal union with Jesus Christ, for it is not enough for Booz to have given Ruth a share in his harvest—he contracts a union with her near the place where she gleaned.

Naomi, who throughout had only obeyed the secret designs of Providence, counsels Ruth to go in the evening and repose at the feet of Booz, who was sleeping at the gate of his field, and there to await in silence what God should do for her.

Ruth obeys her mother-in-law, and Booz finds her, at his awaking in the morning, humbly stretched at his feet; he beholds, and covers her with his mantle, as a token of the alliance which, after some formalities required by the law of Moses, he contracts with her. He espouses her as being her nearest relation.

Ah! we rejoice to understand this symbol; we will act towards our Lord Jesus as Ruth did with Booz; we will repose with sweet peace and holy joy at the door of the tabernacle where Jesus Christ awaits us, where He sleeps hidden under the Eucharistic species. He sleeps, but His heart watches.* He watches for us, and His sweet voice will say to us as Booz did to Ruth: "Blessed art thou of the Lord, my daughter, since for my sake thou hast renounced earthly pleasures which quickly pass away."... He will do more than extend His mantle over us: He will rest His heart on ours, He will espouse us with an eternal union, as the friend who is nearest and dearest to us.

V.

But if the Christian soul is so highly favoured in the Eucharist; if by this gift of God she is enriched and closely united to her Lord and her king, is it not just that, in return, she should clothe herself with the virtues most pleasing to the God of the Eucharist?

* Cant. v. 2.

What, then, are these virtues? Let us consult the history of Ruth, and learn from this favoured woman by what virtues she disposed herself to receive the favors of Booz. Ah! were they not principally Chastity, Charity, Humility?

And, first of all, Chastity; for it is the first eulogium pronounced of her in the sacred books that after the death of her first husband she renounced the hope of a second union to attach herself to Naomi, her mother-in-law, to live with her in the holy state of chaste widowhood.

And then Charity; for it is to support the aged Naomi, and provide for her failing years, that she goes to glean in the field of Booz.

In fine, Humility; for if charity led her to enter this field, exposing herself thus to the eyes of men, a modest humility keeps her far from the crowd of harvesters, and makes her choose the last place.

Chastity, humility, charity, these are the virtues of Ruth, and these are they that the God of the Eucharist demands of us.

First, Chastity; for "who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord: or who shall stand in His holy place? The innocent in hands, and clean of heart."* The God of the Eucharist feedeth only among lilies.† In fine, she who for the first time received into her heart the God of our Altars, was Mary, the purest of Virgins.

Secondly, Humility; for this lowly virtue is the gentle shade in which purity conceals herself to preserve her spotless whiteness. Besides, the greater the elevation conferred on us by the Eucharist, the deeper should we sink in the sense of our utter unworthiness: Mary becomes the Mother of God only when she names herself the handmaid of the Lord.‡ Jesus entered the house of the Centurion when this officer of the gentile army protested to Him, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof."§

Finally, Charity; for who would venture to approach the Sacrament of love without loving? Vainly would my

* Ps. xxiii. 4, 5. † Cant. ii. 16. ‡ Luke i. 38.
§ Matt. viii. 8.

heart be chaste and humble; for without Charity "I an nothing."* God is Charity; God is love.† He is love in the highest heavens, where He is the joy of the angels, and the angels love Him. He is love in all nature, and all nature acknowledges and loves Him; but, oh! above all, He is love on our Altars, and there it is specially our privilege to love Him. The Eucharist demands of us purity, because of the immaculate splendor of the God who resides there; it calls forth humility, because of the veils under which He conceals Himself; it asks for our love in the name and by the love that retains Him thus among us. But the love of God in the heart of a Christian should never be separated from the love of our neighbour, and one should enter into the Divine field, to gather the Eucharist ears, without remembering, like Ruth, the desolate Naomi.

Oh Chastity! Oh Humility! Oh Charity! Amiable virtues which prepare us for the Eucharist, you are the triple garment, the nuptial robe, of those

* 1 Cor. xiii. 2. † 1 John iv. 8.

who are invited to the banquet of Jesus; and you liken these favoured souls to the wise virgins in the gospel. Chastity is the lamp which burns in their hand; Charity is the oil which feeds its flame, and Humility is the gentle slumber which refreshes them while they wait their Heavenly bridegroom. Ah! soon the joyful tidings is heard: "Arise, let us go forth to meet him."* Happy souls, hesitate not; answer this call: you are more favoured than Ruth, for He who invites you is more than Booz, and the tabernacle where He awaits you is more than the fertile field. The touching history we have meditated is only a symbol, the Eucharist is the reality. Believe me, neither the richness of the field, nor the happiness of Ruth, can be compared to the inexhaustible treasures of the Eucharist, to the goodness of the God of the Eucharist, and, above all, to the soul-thrilling happiness in the delights of the Eucharist. May this most Blessed Sacrament be our only joy in Time, as it will be our beatitude in Eternity. Amen.

* Ma xxv. 6.

HOW JESUS CHRIST LOVES US.

Dilexi vos, dicit Dominus, et dixistis: In quo dilexisti nos?

I have loved you, saith the Lord; and you have said, Wherein hast Thou loved us?—*Malach.* i. 2.

I.

I know of no sentence sweeter, from the mouth of our God, than that which He addressed to His people by the prophet Malachy: I have loved you, *ego delexi vox;* and none more unworthy, more ungrateful, more unjust, than the answer of this chosen nation to so much tenderness, Wherein hast Thou loved us—*in quo delexisti nos?*

This God who deigned to call Himself the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, who by the might of His arm had delivered Israel from the yoke of Egypt, and established His people rich and powerful in a land flowing with milk and honey, shedding around them His light, rejoicing them by His presence, guiding them by His messengers and prophets; this God, confiding in a long succession of benefits, though He might recall them to His people, and

comprise them in a word, "I have loved you;" and His people answered by an insult, "In what hast Thou loved us?"

Alas! alas! Israel is not the only nation that God has loved, and to whom He has a right to say, "I have loved you;" neither is it the only one from whom He receives the insulting reply, "In what hast thou loved us?"

We too, Christians as we are, who, for eighteen hundred years, the Lord hath warmed in the bosom of His tenderness, even as a nurse cherisheth her children,* whom He hath wished to gather together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing,† whom He hath desired to raise to heavenly things, as an eagle enticeth her young to fly,‡ we too every day answer to His assertion of tenderness by a response more base and ungrateful on our lips than from those of favoured and unthankful Israel; we too dare to say to His heart of goodness, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?"

And, oh! I repeat it, we could not address to our God a more bitter re-

* 1 Thess. ii. 7. † Matt. xxiii. 37. ‡ Deut. xxxii. 11.

proach, none which attacks more directly His dearest attribute, that of goodness; for it wounds Him in the very apple of His eye, His tenderness for us.

That one of God's creatures should dare in foolish pride to dispute the power of the Almighty, and say to Him, "in what art Thou strong?" would indeed be crime and blasphemy; or, again, if measuring with our short sight the depth of the Divine counsels we should ask, Wherein art Thou wise? or, looking abroad on man in our mad blindness, we should demand, "Wherein art Thou just?" we would in very deed be guilty, and would merit the chastisement of that despised and doubted justice; but what would these proud questions be for the Heart of God, when compared to the cruel blasphemy, "In what hast Thou loved us?"

If at least we would lend an ear to the voice of our God who stoops to plead with us, and defend against our ingratitude the cause of His goodness, our heart's coldness would vanish, and we would soon know "that man cannot be justified compared with God. If he will

contend with Him, he cannot answer Him one for a thousand."*

II.

In what hast Thou loved me? says the poor man to his God ; my life is a weary labor, and the paths of this world bear only thorns for me. The field of the rich man has not an ear of corn to stay my hunger, nor his vine a cluster of grapes to refresh me. Wealth, pleasures, enjoyment, all that forms the happiness of man, is denied me; wherein then hast Thou loved me ?

I have loved thee, answers the Saviour; since for thee, because thou wast poor, I was born; I lived; I died in poverty. I have loved thee, and therefore when I first taught the people, I said, "Blessed are the poor." I have loved thee, and when all have forsaken thee, I, who am thy real treasure, have never abandoned thee. The field of the rich man has no corn for thee, but the field of Divine Providence will always bring forth thy daily bread. Thou hast not, it is true, the treasure that the moth

* Job ix. 2, 3.

corrupts and thieves approach and steal,* neither dost thou know the pleasures that corrupt the heart and pass with life; but in exchange thou hast the first right to the kingdom of Heaven; I have said, "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."

Wherein hast Thou loved me? asks the crushed and bleeding heart, lifting its wailing voice to God. Thou hast taken from me those who were dear to me as my own soul. Thou hast called away my parent, my spouse, a brother, a sister, a child. It was Thyself, Lord, who didst weave around our hearts those close and tender ties; but why didst Thou weave them only to be severed? and having thus severed them wherein has Thou loved me?

I have loved thee, again replies our long-suffering and patient Lord, and I thought of thee when I said, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."† To sanctify thy tears I wept over the grave of Lazarus;‡ and that thou shouldst not mourn as those without

* Luke xii. 33.

† Matt. v. 5. ‡ John xi. 35.

hope, I raised him from the dead, over whose death I wept. Each soul has its own hour of mortal anguish, therefore mine was sorrowful even unto death.* Thy heart is crushed under the weight of affliction, but all ye that pass by the way of suffering, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.†

And not only to the poor, to the afflicted, to the suffering, does the Lord hold this language; no human creature is excepted from His tenderness—no one has a right to say to Him, Wherein hast Thou loved me?

I have loved thee, does He say to the possessor of worldly riches, for I have made thee the minister of my Providence, and the steward of the indigent. I have loved thee, does He say to the man of power in high station, and I have girded thee with strength to do good, and given into thy hand the sword of my justice to punish evil. And to the old man, who has seen generations pass away while he lingers still, "I have loved thee, and have placed upon thy white hairs the crown of prudence, that

* Matt. xxvi. 38. † Lament. i. 12.

thy lips should speak wisdom." And to the young virgin, "I have loved thee, and have taken thy pure heart for my tabernacle." And to little children, "I have loved you, and my delight is to be always with you."

But as God spoke to His entire people, His chosen race, by the mouth of the prophet, saying, "I have loved thee," so does He address all nations of the world. I have loved you, and from age to age you have fulfilled the designs of my providence over the world. I have loved you, to me you owe your just princes and your wise laws. I have loved you, and it is I who, upon the field of battle, have given victory to your standard, and on the ocean riches to your flag. I have loved you, for it is I who support you in your weakness, who correct you in your errors, and who, in the greatest peril, when all seems lost, still preserve suppliant voices to plead for you and a powerful hand to save you.

III.

Let us stop now, and turn our thoughts inward upon ourselves. Why have we

dwelt so long on this word of our God, so kind, so amiable? Why have we first remembered that it is addressed to all men and to all nations, except that, after this thought, we might say it is spoken to none more directly and tenderly than ourselves—ourselves, whom the Lord has chosen from all eternity to be His faithful servants, the adoring lovers of the Eucharist.

Oh! how I have loved you! are ever the words of this divine Saviour in His adorable Sacrament; whether He speaks to us amid the pomp of our churches, exposed and resplendent on our Altars, or from the still depths of His holy tabernacle, nay, even in the quietude of our hours at home, He whispers the sweet secret in our ear. Ah! if others dare to raise a doubt, if they have the rashness to ask wherein consists Thy love, we, Lord, do not hesitate; we do not doubt; and never shall a thought of ingratitude or distrust make us reply to Thee, Wherein hast Thou loved us ?"

But it is just to add that, if this question addressed to God is criminal when it springs from a doubt of His goodness, it

ceases to be so when we would seek to fathom the depths of His tenderness for us, and search into the ways of His love; for the royal prophet says, "Blessed are they that search His testimonies; that seek Him with their whole heart;"* and hence, when Jesus in His adorable Sacrament says to us, I have loved you, we will not fear to enter into sweet converse with Him; and, while our hearts dwell with love on the tenderness of the God of the Eucharist, and our words spring not from doubt or distrust, but from a holy desire of increasing our tribute of thanksgiving, we will reply, "Wherein then, O Lord, hast Thou loved us—*in quo dilexisti nos?*"

IV.

To understand this word of tenderness, it would suffice to meditate the simple lines wherein the beloved disciple paints to us, with so much truth, the intention of his good Master in the institution of the Eucharist: "Having loved His own, who were in the world, He loved

* Psalm cxviii. 2.

them to the end;"* as if he had said, Oh! without doubt the life of Jesus Christ was all love: love in Bethlehem, love in Nazareth, love in Cana, love in all the towns of Judea, love on all the shores of the sea of Tiberias, love everywhere and always; but love supreme, love more ardent, love more tender, love more loving in the last adieu in the Cenacle.

And, indeed, if love seems to be poured out over the whole life of Jesus with a wondrous profusion, we may say that it is concentrated entire in the Eucharist. Let us turn to this divine Sacrament; we will there find three precious treasures of His tenderness for us: first, His heart, which has so much loved us; second, His passion, which was the instrument and glorious proof of His love; and third, His divine grace, which is the fruit and consequence of His love by the merits of His passion.

First, His divine heart; for there it is present, it lives, it throbs with love for us. We do not mean to say that Jesus Christ is not whole and entire in the Eucharist; but as in the scenes of His passion, though

* John xiii. 1.

the whole of Jesus Christ hung upon the cross, yet we dwell on His head crowned with thorns, on His crucified hands and feet, on His side pierced with a spear; what we seek above all, what we find before all, is His heart.

I ask, in what has Jesus Christ loved me—*in quo dilexisti nos?* and I am eager to answer, He has loved so far as to give me His heart.

What more certain proof, oh! my God, what more striking testimony of Thy love couldst Thou have chosen, and who could dare to prefer any other before it?

It is true Thou hast left me Thy word, but this word is powerful only because it sprung from Thy heart: Thou hast loved me more in giving me Thy heart.

Again, it is true Thou hast left me the example of Thy divine virtues, but from Thy heart am I to learn meekness and humility.* Thou hast loved me more in giving me Thy heart.

To console me in my sorrows Thou hast given me a hope of the good things to come, but I am man; living in this

* Matt. xi. 29.

land of exile I have need of a present good, which here below may console and strengthen me...Thou hast then loved me more in here below giving me Thy heart.

The Apostle St. John did not fear to assert that Jesus loved him, because he had pillowed his head on the heart of his Master; and may not we, O Lord, call ourselves Thy beloved, since not once, but every day, our hearts repose on Thine in the adorable Eucharist?

Secondly, the passion of the Saviour, of which the Eucharist is the memorial. For this heart that I adore on the Altar is present as a victim for me. It is there, transpierced by a sword of love, as on Calvary it was opened by a soldier's lance.

The Eucharist is the special memorial of Christ's passion, the testament of His death; and, in fine, we cannot assist at the divine sacrifice without being witnesses of the scene on Calvary.

And, therefore, if I ask, "Wherein has Jesus loved me—*in quo dilexisti nos?*" again I answer, He has loved me, and given Himself for me in the divine

Eucharist, as a victim for my faults. He has loved me, and renews every day in my presence the sacrifice that has saved me. He has loved me, and every day inundates me with the blood of the Lamb that redeemed me. Oh! let us dwell on this proof of His love.

In the eternal designs of Providence, it was not only the life of the Man-God, it was not only His word, His examples, His miracles, that were to save the world, it was His passion and death. But as His passion and death, so also the perpetuity of the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is one with the immolation on Calvary. We cannot separate one from the other, the passion from the Eucharist. What the one is, that is the other: as is the love of Jesus in the passion, so is His love in the Eucharist. The passion and the Eucharist are one complete whole, which it is not permitted us to rend; and therefore I love, following this doctrine, to include the Eucharist in this word of our Saviour, "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."* Yes, Lord,

* John xv. 13.

this, indeed, is true...To die, first, an ignominious death on the cross of Calvary; to die in the midst of tortures, that Thou mightest expiate our sins;... and then, through the continuation of ages, to offer Thyself at every instant, in a state of death, on our Altars; to give Thyself up, first, as a willing victim into the hands of the executioner, to redeem our offences;...and then to abandon Thyself every day into our hands, as a victim of love for our happiness!...Oh! this is to love as no one else has loved; and now, my God, I know wherein Thou hast loved me.

Finally, the gift of grace, which is the fruits of the Saviour's passion, and which the Eucharist communicates to us with more abundance, as the most august of all the sacraments.

These latter produce grace, only because they identify us with Jesus, who alone is truly just, truly holy, and worthy of Himself of the friendship of God. Their matter is an efficacious sign, only because it represents the blood of Jesus Christ flowing for us, and His flesh uniting itself to ours.

Thus the water of baptism is the blood of Jesus Christ that washes us; the oil of Confirmation is the strength of Jesus Christ struggling with His sacred flesh against the powers of darkness; but the Eucharist is this flesh and this blood themselves, which form but one with us, so that it is no longer we who live, but Jesus Christ liveth in us.* How, then, shall we not be the friends of God? How can it be that this divine union shall not establish us in a state of eminent grace? The Eucharist exacts of us, it is true, because of its very excellence, the most perfect dispositions to approach it; our conscience must already be pure; baptism or penance must already have conferred on us *the first grace*, which the Eucharist gives not; but it is not less the most powerful instrument of grace in our souls, the most certain means of establishing and strengthening us in the friendship. Lord Jesus, behold again wherein Thou hast loved us: *in quo dilexisti nos?*

Thou hast loved us in communicating to us Thy grace. Thou hast loved us

* Gal. ii. 20.

in becoming a victim for us. Thou hast loved us in giving us Thy heart; and this triple testimony of love I find in the Eucharist; for thy heart which loves me, Thy passion which saves me, Thy grace which divinizes me, is to my heart the same thing, always the Eucharist; always Thy love. . . . Thy love, whose fulness I begin to comprehend, only because I know the Eucharist.

Hence, O my God! when Thou shalt say to me as Thou didst to Thy people, "I have loved thee, *ego dilexi vos*," fear not that I ask, "Wherein hast Thou loved me—*in quo dilexisti nos?*" . . . No; but lifting my eyes to Thy divine tabernacle, and weeping tears of grateful joy, I will answer Thee, "Yes, Lord, Thou lovest me, and I know wherein Thou hast loved me."

V.

But in closing this Meditation, behold a thought it suggests to me, and on which I willingly rest, for it leads to a practical conclusion.

In the text of Malachias it is God

who speaks to His people and says, "I have loved thee—*dilexi vos;*" and His people reply: "Wherein hast Thou loved us—*in quo dilexisti nos?*" But now my thought changes, and it is I who say to God, I love Thee. Ah! how often is not this my language! I love Thee. . . It is my dearest prayer, and the one that springs quickest to my lips. I love Thee. It gushes from my heart, at every hour of the day, in every spot whither my footsteps incline, in every situation of my life, in my sorrows to relieve them, in my joys to fill up the measure of my gladness. I love Thee. . . . It is the chorus of every hymn; it is, of all the voices of nature, the thrilling echo to my heart. I love Thee. . . . It was the first lisping of my cradle; it will be the last sigh of my heart. I love Thee, I love Thee. This is my language. But, alas! has not God reason to question me and say, "Wherein hast thou loved me—*in quo dilexisti me?*"

Ah! let us be careful lest we stop with mere words of love; lest we be like those who honour our God with

their lips, while their heart is far from Him. The Lord demands that we should love Him, but how? That we should love Him by our works, that we should love Him by our repentance, that we should love Him by our sincere conversion: the rule of conduct He gives us is clear and plain, "If you love Me, keep My commandments;"* and again, "This is the will of God, your sanctification."† Oh! what love, what ardent love is there in chastity, in humility, in patience, in the exact practice of all the Christian virtues! The purity of him who is chaste has a voice like that of angels, to say continually to God, I love Thee. The hidden life of him who is humble, his solitude, even his silence, cry aloud to God and say, I love Thee. Sufferings patiently borne have eloquent words that rise to God and utter in His ear, I love Thee. To be chaste, humble, patient, charitable, and to become holy, this is the love God asks of us.

May we, faithful to this divine invitation, loving God by our actions, as we

* John xiv. 15. † 1 Thess. iv. 3.

are loved by Him by His daily benefits, merit the recompense that the Lord promises to those who love Him: "If any one love Me he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him."* Amen.

CONFIDENCE.

Ego sum, nolite timere.
It is I, fear not—Mat. xiv. 27, Luke xxiv. 36.

I.

It seems to me that one of the words that Jesus Christ most loves us to dwell on, and meditate, because most calculated to fill us with a tender confidence in Him, is that which He addresses to His apostles in two places of His Gospel: "It is I, fear not—*ego sum, nolite timere.*"

The apostles were naturally weak and timid. They were little according to the world, disposing of no power or honour, for God "chooses the weak things of this world to confound the

* John xiv. 23

strong,"* and hence, in His communications with them, their Divine Master often said, "Fear nothing; confide in Me—*nolite timere, confidite.*" Once it was in these words: "Fear not those who kill the body. . . . Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. Fear ye not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows."†

And again: "Fear not, little flock for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom."‡

And in another place: "In the world ye shall have distress; but have confidence, I have overcome the world."‖

But of all the motives Jesus Christ loved to place before His disciples to animate their courage, I know none more convincing and more touching than these words, which He repeats twice in His Gospel : "Fear not, I am with you: It is I, fear not—*ego sum, nolite timere.*"

His disciples were embarked in a frail

* 1 Cor. i. 27.

† Matt. x. 28-31. ‡ Luke xii. 32. ‖ John xvi. 33.

vessel; a storm arose, and they were in danger of perishing, when Jesus came to them, walking upon the waves of the sea. "Fear not," said He to them, "It is I—*ego sum, nolite timere;*" teaching them thus, that He in whom they trusted was the Master of nature, since it was subject to Him, and making known to them that they also, who were soon to become the vessel of the Church, as long as they should follow Him and be united to Him, should tread on the tempest, and trample on the stormy wave of the world.

Another time—it was after His resurrection—He appeared to His disciples, when they were assembled in secret, for fear of the Jews. "Peace be with you," said He; "fear not, it is I—*ego sum, nolite timere;*" strengthening them thus by His presence, rendering them witnesses of the greatest and most decisive of His miracles; above all, teaching them that they should have no fear even of the king of terrors, since He had overcome death, and led captivity captive.

II.

But not to His apostles only—to all Christians does He say, "Fear not, I am with you—*ego sum, nolite timere.*" In effect, what could be a more unshaken support, a stronger assurance of safety, amid the dangers by which we are surrounded, the trials to which we are exposed, than this pledge of His love, this promise of His abiding presence among us? Instead of saying to us with His own divine lips, "It is I," He might have sent us His prophets, His apostles, His ministers, and they, clothed with strength from on high, opposing the truth of their doctrine to the errors of the age, the force of their example to the torrent of the world, could have said to us, "Fear not, our strength, which is not our strength, our virtue, which is not our virtue, our doctrine, which is not our doctrine, but the doctrine, word, and virtue of God, are with you; then fear not—*nolite timere.*" Or He might have sent to us one of His angels, as He did to the

young Tobias, and who, like Raphael, knowing all the paths we have to tread,* may lead us, and bring us back in safety,† saying to us always, "Fear not, it is I—*nolite timere.*"

But, oh! it is sweeter to hear the Inspirer of prophets, the Master of the apostles, the King of angels, the Creator of heaven and earth, my Redeemer, and my Saviour, Jesus Christ Himself, say to me, Fear not, it is I; I am always with thee—*ego sum, nolite timere.*

Yes, it is Jesus Christ who holds to me this language, and from Him alone I love to hear it. And, indeed, who but Himself and those sent by Him—what creature, what element, what power, what domination can say to us, "Fear not, I am with thee—*ego sum, nolite timere?*"

I launch upon a tranquil sea the vessel that contains my treasure and my hopes; no cloud darkens the sky; no billow ruffles the ocean's glossy breast; all seems to say, Trust to these rippling waters, this cloudless haven, this gentle wind. The vessel leaves the

* Tobias v. 8. † Ibid v. 20.

shore, when, quick as thought, the storm rises, the thunder bursts, and the ocean swallows up what I had confided to it. I was deceived. Neither a cloudless sky nor a tranquil sea can say to the travellers of this world, "Fear not."

Am I more sure of the solid ground I tread under my feet? I deposit in its bosom the foundation of the house where I dwell, the roots of the plants that are to nourish me. Fool that I am! The earth quakes, and all my possessions are buried in its depths. . . . For the earth, too, is powerless to say to those whom it carries in its breast, "Fear not; confide in me."

I have friends in whom I trust. If they are weak, they cannot assist me; if they are powerful, they forget me: one is terrified at the difficulty of serving me; another is torn from me by death, and in the end I find not one who can say to me, "Fear not; rely on Me —*ego sum, nolite timere.*"

Jesus Christ, on the contrary, addresses to all this consoling promise, and He keeps the word He has pledged.

"Fear not," says He to the sinner, "it is I—*ego sum;* I who am the Lamb of God, immolated on Calvary to blot out thy sins; I, whose heart sighed for thee; I, whose eyes wept over thee; I, whose feet are weary running after thee; I, whose hands are stretched out to thee; I, whose blood has flowed for thee. It is I, fear not—*ego sum.*"

"Fear not," says He to the timid and doubtful soul, "it is I; I, thy Saviour; I, thy light and thy salvation. Whom, then, canst thou fear? I am the protector of thy life; of whom shalt thou be afraid? If enemies trouble thee, they themselves shall be weakened and shall fail; if armies should encamp around thee, if battle be drawn up against thee, fear not, I am with thee;* fear not, it is I."

Fear not, does He say also to the just soul, it is I; I, who try thee sometimes, it is true, but only to increase thy merit; I, who chastise thee often, because I love thee; I, who in heaven will be thy reward, exceeding great. Fear not, it is I—*ego sum.*

* Psalm xxvi. 1-3.

III.

It would seem that this word of confidence, which Jesus loves so much to pronounce, suffices of itself alone to account for His coming into the world, His birth, His life, His sufferings, His death.

His coming into the world, for the God of the Jews held to this rebellious people quite a different language. He spoke to them only in the midst of lightnings; His voice was mingled with the sound of thunder, and the throne whence He dictated his awful words was a burning mountain. Hence the people said to Moses, "Speak thou to us, and we will hear; let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die."*

Ah the Christian people love better the voice of the Lord. But let us continue our thought. What amenity in His birth, what meekness in His life, what goodness and love in His passion and death!

Let us consider the child Jesus in Bethlehem. How lovely is the scene, and what confidence it inspires! This child is God; but where is His divine

* Exodus xx. 19.

majesty? He is king, but where are the ensigns of His power? I behold only an infant resting in the lap of his mother; near him stands a poor mechanic and around are a group of angels, who sing, Peace to men of good will; and to enlighten this wondrous scene there is come a star from the East, which sheds on them its tranquil rays. Oh! when the shepherds and the magi approached the divine child to offer adoration and homage, does He not seem to say, by His infantile smile, by the gentle caresses of Mary, by the voice of the angels, and by the calm soft beams of the star, Fear not, it is I—*ego sum, nolite timere?*

From Bethlehem He passes to Nazareth; from the crib to the carpenter's shop—the one as humble as the other. You have nothing to fear, either from the charms of a child who grows in grace and wisdom before God and man, or from the docility of a son who knows only how to obey His mother, or from the lowliness of a young man who conceals Himself for thirty years. At Nazareth, as at Bethlehem, does He say to you, It is I, fear not—*ego sum, nolite timere.*

His public life begins, with what marvellous sweetness, to give confidence to all! . . . He does not dispute; He does not cry aloud; neither is His voice heard abroad.* He says to the bruised reed, Fear not, I will not break thee; and to the smoking flax, Fear not, it is I; I will not quench thee. He says to the poor, Fear not, it is I, who will be thy riches; and to the mourner, Fear not, it is I, who will console thee. He says to the blind, Fear not, I will be thy light; and to the lame, Fear not, I will make thee walk. He says to the strayed sheep, Fear not, I am the good shepherd; and to the prodigal child. Fear not, I am thy true Father; and He sees him afar off, and stretches out His arms to receive him, and fold him with gladness to His heart.

And, in fine, it is not certainly the passion and death of our divine Redeemer which will check or diminish the feeling of confidence in our heart. We might have thought that He whose omnipotence had worked so many miracles would at last resist His enemies and

* Isaiah xlii. 2.

make His persecutors tremble. But no; He remains meek at the approach of death, obedient in presence of the cross, dumb as a lamb before his shearer.* He presents His cheeks to the buffeting, His naked shoulders to the executioner's rod, His lips to the vinegar and gall; but at the same time, to make known to us that neither His sufferings nor His infirmities took from Him aught of the divine majesty, to inspire the world with that confidence which springs from strength, as well as that which is breathed by goodness and love, in the first scenes of His passion, He threw to the ground those who wished to seize Him; and dying on the cross, He opened the graves and covered the sun with a veil, seeming thus to say to the terrified universe, at that awful hour, "Fear not, it is I; I, who am meek and humble with all. Fear not, it is I; I, who am powerful over nature and the world—*Nolite timere, ego sum.*"

IV.

And this sweet feeling of confidence which our Saviour loved to awaken in

* Isaiah liii. 7.

the hearts of His disciples, of all those who heard or saw Him during the days of His stay on earth, He desires to breathe into our hearts also, that we, too, might make of it the pillar and ground of our hope. But since this confidence is to rest on these words of our Saviour, "Fear not, it is I," it is necessary, in order that our confidence may be lasting, that they should be ever addressed to us; it is necessary that Jesus, in His immense love, should invent some means of saying to us unceasingly, and always, and in very truth, "Fear not, it is I." This wonder, this secret of His love, is the Eucharist.

Yes, upon our altars, every day, at the awful moment of consecration, Jesus Christ says to us, by the mouth of the priest, "This is my body; it is I —*ego sum*;" and then offering Himself to His eternal Father as a propitiatory and powerful victim, interposing Himself between us and our Judge, He seems to add, "Fear not—*nolite timere*."

"It is I, fear not." Here is another of the sweet words the Eucharist addresses to us, in its mysterious language;

and while it is a tender expression of the love of God for us, it is, at the same time, a motive of that unbounded confidence He invites us to place in Him.

"It is I—*ego sum*." . . . For eighteen hundred years, Jesus having quitted the earth, it would seem that to the angels and saints only He could hold this language. To them who gaze during a raptureful eternity on the splendour of His beauty and the boundlessness of His glory, to them He seems ever to say, "It is I—*ego sum;*" and this sight and this word inebriates them every instant with delight that is always new.

But on the lips of Jesus Christ this is not the language of heaven only; He speaks it on earth in the Eucharist:

"It is I, fear not." . . . Fear nothing; first, because of the humble veils that conceal Me. Here I am more lowly than in the crib, and the shepherds did not fear Me. Here I am more docile and meek than in the house of Nazareth, and Mary and Joseph did not fear Me. Here I am more destitute than during my mortal life; I had not then where to repose my head, and now I only ask to

rest in your tabernacles and in your hearts. Fear not—*nolite timere.*

"But, again, fear nothing, for in this Sacrament I have concealed My power, yet I bring with me My graces and benedictions; fear nothing from the infirmities of your flesh, here is My sacred flesh which shall heal yours; fear nothing from your past defilements, here you may draw blood and water from My side to cleanse them. Poor wandering sheep, fear nothing, this is the fold and the pasture; poor prodigal child, fear nothing, this is the feast of reconciliation; poor Samaritan woman, fear nothing, this is the gift of God which thou shalt know and taste; poor stranger wounded on the way, fear nothing, here is oil and wine to heal thy wounds. Whoever you may be, fear nothing, this is the true fruit of life, of which it is written, 'That in what day soever ye shall eat thereof ye shall be as gods.'"*

I listen with delight, oh! my God, to these consoling words, and, on my part, I do not hesitate to yield to this appeal for confidence. Yes, when I approach

* Gen. iii. 5.

Thy tabernacle, and from it hear Thee say to me, "It is I—*ego sum*," I adore, but I do not fear; I love, but I do not fear; I humble myself profoundly, but I do not fear; I gaze calmly on the enemies of my soul, I despise them, and fear them no longer; I resign myself to the sufferings of life, the storms of the world, the tribulations of the flesh; I resign myself, and I fear not. I find that this sweet confidence renders it easy to avoid sin, and to practise virtue; and I say often to myself, that as the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,* so its perfection and consummation is a blind confidence in the God of the Eucharist.

V.

But if Jesus Christ, by His presence in the Sacrament of our Altars, reassures us with so much love against disquietude and trouble on His part, what does He demand for the confidence He desires we should feel?

He wishes, when He comes into our hearts, to be able to trust to us; He desires to hear from us, It is I, fear not,

* Ecclus. i. 16.

O Lord, fear nothing from your ungrateful and rebellious child.

Oh! I love, my God, to speak to Thee this language: It is I, Lord, I who have so often offended Thee; I, whom Thou knowest to be weak and guilty; but yet, I, from henceforth, Thy faithful servant, Thy docile child. . . . Fear no longer that my protestations may deceive Thee, my promises be vain, my kisses betray Thee; it is I, fear not.

And Jesus Christ will indeed fear nothing from our past infidelities; He will confide in us, if we love Him with all our heart; and, on the contrary, our best works without love will not reassure Him, for it is written, "Better are the wounds of a friend than the deceitful kisses of an enemy."*

In the beginning of His passion, one of His twelve Apostles, one of those whom He had deigned to admit first to the Eucharistic Table, drew nigh and kissed Him. Does not this kiss seem to say, "Fear not, O Lord, it is I, Thy disciple and friend?" . . . But Judas did not love his Master, and Jesus Christ had

* Prov. xxvii. 6.

every thing to fear from Judas: the kiss of the Apostle was the sign of treason.

But again, some minutes after, another Apostle, Simon Peter, thrice denies his Lord; but hardly is the fault committed, when Peter wept it bitterly, and, interrogated soon after by his dear Master, he answers three times with a gush of tenderness and repentance, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." . . . To Jesus Christ this was as if he had said, "Fear not, Lord, trust me yet again; I have sinned, but I weep; I have sinned, but I love Thee; I have sinned, but yet fear not." And Jesus did indeed confide in him, and chose him to be the corner-stone of the Church, and gave into his hands the keys of the kingdom of Heaven.

Let us profit by so great an example; let us love Jesus Christ with all our hearts, and He will confide fully in us, as He asks us to confide in Him.

In instituting the Eucharist, Jesus Christ wished to establish in His church the reign of confidence, a confidence wherewith He trusts us, and a confidence He desires we should repose in

Him. Fools that we are, not to correspond to so many advances.

A day will come when the Lord will demand an account of the precious grace of confidence we ought to place in the Eucharist; it will be the day of judgment. Then Jesus Christ will manifest Himself to a guilty world. He will have cast aside the Sacramental veils; but His countenance will be terrible to those who have corresponded to His confidence by ingratitude and forgetfulness. Then He will say to them, "It is I—*ego sum*—I whom you have despised, insulted, outraged; it is I, but fear, now, fear the wrath of the Lamb."*

Then turning to the Blessed of His Father, to those whom a sweet confidence in the Eucharist shall have maintained in the narrow way, He will say, "It is I—*ego sum*. You have had much to suffer, but the time of trial is past; fear not, it hath pleased My Father to give you a kingdom—*nolite timere. . . . quia complacuit Patri vestro dare vobis regnum*."† May this precious gift be bestowed on us all! Amen.

* Apoc. vi. 16. † Luke xii. 32.

THE THREE DOVES.

Estote quasi columba, nidificans in summo ore foraminis.
Be ye like the dove, that maketh her nest in the mouth of the hole in the highest place.—*Jer.* xlviii. 28.

I.

In the sacred writings the dove is ever an image of the faithful soul; and, indeed, what type could suit her better, timid as she is like the dove, simple and candid like the dove, loving like the dove, and, like the dove, swift in her flight towards high things, the things of eternity? This is the reason that this image is so often found in Holy Scripture.

We have heard the prophet Jeremias address to the children of Moab this sublime counsel, "Leave the cities and dwell in the rock: and be ye like the dove that maketh her nest in the mouth of the hole in the highest place."*

Let us now hear the Spouse in the Canticles speak to her beloved: "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come;

* Jer xlviii. 28.

my dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall."*

Again, let us hear the royal prophet: "Who will give me wings like the dove, and I will fly and be at rest?"

These three doves are to me the figure of a soul who, after the example of each, successively, takes refuge in the hole of the rock, builds her nest on the highest cliff, and, in fine, wings her flight to repose.

But what is meant by this mysterious language? what is pointed out by this hole in the rock, where the dove seeks refuge; this high cliff, where she builds her nest; and this flight and this repose?

Let us ask the Divine Spirit to explain to us these symbols; Him who did not disdain to take the form of a dove; Him of whom it is written, His communication is with the simple.† Divine Dove, I listen to Thy words, and I too wish to meditate them with confidence and simplicity. "I will meditate like a dove — *meditabor ut columba.*"‡

* Can. ii. 13, 14. † Prov. iii. 32. ‡ Isaiah xxxviii. 14.

II.

The first image is that of the dove that seeks refuge in the holes of the rock. Why does she fly, and what means this refuge?

Why does she fly? . . . Ah! doubtless she has strayed far from the place of her rest; she is weak, too, and powerless, and she found herself surrounded by peril; a thousand snares were set for her; the vulture and the fowler made pitiless war against her. And yet if she had been only weak, but she was imprudent; having loved the danger, she nearly perished in it;* not having suspected the snare, she was nearly taken. Perhaps even more than this: weak and imprudent she has become guilty; she is the decoyed dove which has lost her heart—*columba seducta non habens cor.*†

Now, what shall she do? whither will she go? and who will save her? Oh! happily for her, when all attack and pursue her, one has remained her friend; and when everywhere around her she

* Ecclus. iii. 27. † Osee vii. 11.

hears only words of seduction, or cries of death, one voice calls to her and says, "Come, oh! my dove, come and take refuge in the cleft of the rock." Oh! how the rock delights me for her, for she is weak; and how I love the hole in the rock, since she needs shelter and repose! There in very truth she finds safety; there she nurses herself, for she is wounded; there she hides, for she is ashamed; there she seeks shelter, for she is pursued; there she slumbers, for she is fatigued.

It is a lovely picture, but I long to pierce these veils and behold the reality.

What is meant, then, by this dove, except our soul wandering in the midst of the world, and abandoned to its caprices? It is far from Thee, oh! my God, and yet Thou art its light and its salvation.* Ah! who among us, when looking back on our past lives, does not recognize in himself the wanderings of the dove, the wounds of the dove, the sorrows of the dove? but wanderings more fatal, wounds much more cruel, sorrows much more poignant! Let us

* Psalm xxv

hear the royal prophet, who borrows the voice of the decoyed dove:

"The sorrows of death have compassed me, and the perils of hell have found me;"* and again, "The wicked have bent their bow; they have prepared their arrows in the quiver, to shoot in the dark the upright of heart."† Fools that we were, we said, Peace, peace, and there was no peace.‡ We loved what we ought to have hated, and we have cast ourselves into the snare, as a bird into the net of a fowler, not thinking of the peril to our soul.

Oh! my God, what will become of this soul? In her distress she has said, "Whither shall I flee from thy face?"§ She has known how to wander, but not to return; it was easy to run to ruin, but hard to repair her loss. Neither heaven nor earth is suited to her: heaven, because she is guilty; earth, because she is unhappy.

Ah! He who took pity on the dove regards her in His mercy, for He is the "Lord, who lovest souls."‖ He calls

* Ps. cxiv. 3. † Ibid. x. 3. ‡ Jer. vi. 14.
§ Ps. cxxxviii. 7. ‖ Wisdom xi. 27.

her, and His words to her are full of sweet mercy. "Come," says He, "come, oh! my dove, seek refuge in the holes of the rock." But what is meant by this rock? The Apostle St. Paul tells us. "And the rock was Christ."* And the holes of the rock, what are they? David teaches us when he says, "They have dug my hands and my feet."† Ah! now I understand the true meaning of the words, "take refuge in the holes of the rock;" it is, "Go and conceal thyself deeply in the wounds of Jesus crucified."

Oh! divine rock, how steadfast art thou! Oh! divine cavities of the rock, how sweet ye are! What henceforth shall I fear, since here is my asylum? If the tempest shrieks around me, my heart shall not fear, the rock resists the storm; if the enemy pursues me, I shall laugh at his vain folly, concealed as I am in the holes of the rock. In the shelter of this beloved retreat my soul shall forget her miseries, and her wounds shall heal; she will say in the gladness of her heart, "Unless the Lord had

* 1 Cor. x. 4. † Psalm xxi. 17.

been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell."* Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us to be a prey to their teeth. Our soul hath been delivered as a sparrow out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are delivered. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."†

III.

We have now found the refuge of the first dove, but where is the summit on which the second builds her nest? for it is this one the Prophet bids us resemble: "Be like the dove who builds her nest in the highest hole of the rock—*Estote sicut columba nidificans in summo cre foraminis.*"

And, first, does it not seem that in her who seeks refuge there is more fear, while she who builds her nest has more confidence and love? The one hides herself all trembling, the other sits quietly on the edge of the rock, in the broad rays of the sun. Both lean upon the rock, but the first seems to ask only

* Ibid. xciii. 17. † Psalm cxxiii. 6-8.

a temporary asylum to repair her strength, the other seems to have chosen it for her abode. Or if in the text there is meant the same dove, I should say that, at first pursued and trembling, she desired only the hole in the rock, but as she grew strong in her retreat, feeling that she could take wing, her eye turned to the summit of the rock; she gained its highest peak, and, finding a convenient place, she built her nest, saying, "It is good for us to be here."*

What is meant by this elevated place? I would not dare of myself to explain the passage, if the royal Prophet had not suggested the meaning of the symbol.

"The sparrow hath found her a house, and the turtle a nest for herself, where she may lay her young ones: Thy Altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God;"† and again, "Leave the cities for the summit of the rock, and be like the dove who builds her nest on the edge of the highest hole." What is this but to say, Leave the dwellings of the world, quit the low places of earth, you who belong not to earth; leave the dead to

* Mat. xvii. 4. † Psalm lxxxiii 4.

bury their dead,* and ascend to the sublime heights of the Altar; then thy heart and thy flesh shall rejoice, for lovely are the tabernacles of the Lord of hosts.†

Oh! how I love to think that this highest crevice in the rock, where the dove builds her nest and is safe from the world, is the tabernacle of our Altars. Yes, the Eucharist is indeed the summit of the rock Jesus Christ. If we consider in Thee, O Jesus, Thou bearest us, the Eucharist is the summit of Thy love; if we look upon the graces with which Thou inundatest us, the Eucharist is the greatest of Thy graces; and if we turn to the happiness Thou givest us, the Eucharist is our highest happiness. The Eucharist, in fine, is on the highest place of the Altar.

Ah! let the sparrow abide under the roof of the house, let the swallow be content with the nest she has built for her young, yet, O Lord of virtues, my King and my God, Thy Altars are the impassioned desire of my heart; they are the summit I have chosen for ever

* Matt. viii. 22. † Psalm lxxxiii. 2.

and ever. Long, it is true, I hid myself in the hole of the rock, in the wounds of the Saviour. I meditated the sorrows of Jesus crucified, I washed myself in His precious blood. Oh! with what delight I plunged therein! . . . . But because I humbled myself in the depths of the passion, I heard a voice which said, "Come higher—*ascende superius;*" and I flew to the summit of the rock. Here is the rest I desire; here is the mountain where it is good for me to be; "this is my rest for ever and ever; here will I dwell, for I have chosen it."*

IV.

There remains yet for our meditation the third dove, whose lot the prophet envies: "Who will give me wings like the dove, that I may fly and be at rest?"

This dove asks no refuge, not even a nest; she takes wing and flies, and reaches a repose which is not of this world. Without doubt on the summit of the rock she had found a fitting nest; but there she still rested on the earth,

* Psalm cxxxi. 14.

and man is born to labour, as the bird to fly.* Soon she finds herself filled with an ardent desire of Heaven. In the nest that she has built, her wings have grown large, and her strength is increased; she takes wing, she flies, and is seen no more; like the dove that Noah sent forth from the ark, which returned no more.†

What is pointed out by this last dove, except the flight the soul takes when separated from this body, which imprisons and enslaves her? She springs to Thee, oh! my God, and the repose of Thy bosom. Oh! blessed flight, and most blessed repose! Ah! without doubt the Eucharist is worth more than all that is on earth: the Eucharist is worth more than pleasures; the Eucharist is worth more than honours; the Eucharist is worth more than riches; the Eucharist is worth more than all the graces of God in this world. But the Eucharist is not Heaven; for it presents to us our God concealed under veils that hide Him from our eyes, and Heaven shall show Him all unveiled to

* Job. v. 7. † Gen. viii 12.

our rejoicing sight. The Eucharist has need of faith and love, Heaven demands only love.

But who will give us wings that we may gain the repose of Heaven? Ah! let us not fear to answer—Death, and death alone. Death so full of anguish for him who believes not, but so consoling and sweet for us who have chosen our abode at the foot of the tabernacle.

Death gives us much more than it takes from us; it takes from us the world which passes, the vanities that have deceived us, the pleasures that have seduced us; and it gives us wings to fly and to repose.

V.

O my God! behold, then, the degrees of ascension my soul must follow to reach unto Thee: Thy Divine wounds, Thy Eucharist, Thy Heaven. . . . . If I am pursued by the enemy, Thy wounds; if I sigh for repose, Thy Eucharist . . . and if I die, Heaven.

O my God! I ask of Thee only three things—do not refuse them to me—a refuge like the dove in Thy wounds; a

nest like the dove near Thy tabernacle; and, in fine, the repose of the dove, that of Heaven. Amen.

THE GIFTS OF GOD.

Si scires donum Dei.
If thou didst know the gift of God.—*John* iv. 10.

I.

Among the merciful words of our Saviour there is one that has always singularly struck me. It is that which He addresses to the Samaritan at the beginning of the long conversation which we have all read, meditated, and loved: "If thou didst know the gift of God—*Si scires donum Dei.*"

Oh! what touching goodness in that word of love, and what ardent interest for that perishing soul! but at the same time, if I dare say it, what exquisite grace and what marvellous knowledge in the divine art of converting souls! "If thou didst know the gift of God." Jesus Christ does not yet reveal it to the Samaritan, but He shows to her a

glimpse of its charms. He does not reproach her for not knowing it, but He gives her to understand that if she did know it she would love it, and if she loved it she would be saved.

Oh, what would I have given to have assisted at the smallest details of this scene, when the Saviour, fatigued with His journey, wearied with having sought us and called us so long, sorrowful above all by our ingratitude and our faults, sat and rested on the well of Jacob, where the Samaritan was drawing water! What to have seen the Lord Jesus at this blessed hour, when He saved a soul! To have seized the heavenly fire which beamed from His eyes! and that inimitable and irresistible accent with which He must have pronounced these words: "If thou didst know the gift of God!"

I imagine that His looks, His gesture, His voice, all had that inspired air which said, "It is thy God who speaks to thee; delay not; behold, now is for thee the acceptable time; behold, now is the hour of thy salvation; learn now to know the gift of God;" but at the same time I will not be astonished that

the Saviour deigns to adopt the tone of a suppliant, who implores, and who fears to be repulsed.

"If thou didst know the gift of God . . . if thou didst know this gift, which is for thy peace; this gift, which is thy consolation in every pain, the pardon for all thy faults, the support in all thy weakness; if thou didst know that this gift is Myself, the joy of angels—Myself, the salvation of man. . . . But thou art not only ignorant of this gift: thou art feeble, thou art changeful and enslaved by thy passions, with little generosity to aim at what is good. . . . Oh! how shall I offer thee the gift of God, and thou not reject it! how show it to thee, and thou not be disgusted with it! how impose it upon thee, and thou not resist it! . . . Ah! if thou hadst chosen thy part, if thou hadst understood the blessing I propose to thee, if thou hadst known the gift of God! . ."

It seems to me that all these thoughts were crowding upon the merciful heart of Jesus. . . . And I will dwell upon them till my own heart is filled with them, for is not this word of

Saviour that which every day we, priests and laity, must address to the frivolous and worldly souls among whom we live?

The habits of levity and dissipation that they have contracted have closed their minds to every serious thought; their exterior and sensual life blinds them to all the interior beauty of the daughter of Zion; and meanwhile, their most sacred interests are at stake; their salvation is in danger; life passes and death is at hand. What shall zeal do to reach them? their language is so different from ours, their thoughts are so far from our own; above all, our love is not in their hearts. What power can we exert upon them? what shall we do? what say? . . . Ah! when Providence brings them in our way, terrified as we are at the future they are preparing for themselves, desirous to make them share the happiness we find in the Christian religion, we watch for the moment or the word that will wound them least, and the sentence that first of all we venture, is: "If thou didst know the gift of God—*Si scires donum Dei.*"

But this is indeed the language we

must hold if we speak to the world of the divine Eucharist; of that gift of God by excellence to which is applied this sentence of the Saviour: "All men take not this word."* Oh! here in very truth we speak a language which is not that of the world, and how shall it understand us? For it has not tasted how sweet the Lord is in the holy Eucharist; and what great things do we not know of His riches and His charms! We know that the Eucharist, frequently and faithfully received, has torn the scales from our eyes, and placed us in happy communion with the clear truth of God. We know that if our heart was hard the Eucharist has gradually softened it; and that if our passions were ardent the Eucharist has given us power over their violence. We know that a moment passed at the foot of the tabernacle is worth more to us than years spent in the tents of sinners.† We know that if the joys of the world are bitter, and its conversation wearisome, of the Eucharist we may say, "Its conversation hath no bitter-

* Matt. xix. 11. † Ps. lxxxiii. 11.

ness, nor its company any tediousness, but joy and gladness."* We know, in fine, that this same God, to whom we have offered an asylum and a tabernacle on earth, will not refuse us a home and a resting in heaven. These things we know, and therefore we never weary in speaking of the delights of the Eucharist.

But for the world, what is the Eucharist? what is it, compared to a pleasure, to a distraction? So that to persuade it that the Eucharist is worth more than its vanities, language fails and speech falters.

Lord Jesus, if Thou wert to send me to the world to spread abroad the knowledge and love of the Eucharist, it is not my own language I would employ, but Thine. I would remember that which Thou didst hold to the Samaritan woman; I would borrow Thy expressions; I would borrow, if it were possible, Thy voice; and above all, I would borrow Thy heart: then, endeavouring to make known to those among whom Thou wouldst send me, all that they lose in ignoring this Thy sacrament of

* Wisd. viii. 16.

love, and all that they would gain by Thy sweet friendship, I would say to them, in Thy own words, "If you knew the gift of God—*Si scires donum Dei.*"

II.

But Jesus Christ does not stop at this first word with the Samaritan. He continues the conversation, and brings her, little by little, to acknowledge and adore Him as the true Messiah. Let us follow, step by step, the path of this divine wisdom, which ordereth all things with sweetness, and let us see if it does not point out to us the means of making the world appreciate the divine gift of the Eucharist.

When Jesus Christ addresses the Samaritan, He seems at first only to ask a charitable office—an alms. She, as St. Augustine remarks, does not reply by a refusal; far from it; but what makes her hesitate is the sense of her unworthiness, the thought of her indignity. "How," said she, "dost thou, being a Jew, ask of me to drink, who am a Samaritan woman?" Oh! behold in her

at once a great virtue—charity, and humble charity!

Jesus Christ, who sounds hearts, knew her good-will, and because a cup of water given in His name shall not be without reward, He will recompense the Samaritan. The good instincts He finds in her are a seed which He will make germinate. From the material charity which this poor woman would gladly do Him, He rises with her to a higher thought—that of the spiritual charity which He can alone bestow on her. She was disposed to give Him some drops of water from the well of Jacob, and behold, at once He says to her: "If thou didst know the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but he that shall drink of the water I will give him shall not thirst for ever, for it shall become unto him a fountain of water, springing unto everlasting life."*

The Samaritan saw that the Saviour's

* John iv. 10-14.

alms was better than hers, and forgetting the water of the well of Jacob, she cries out, "Lord, give me of this water—*Domine, da mihi hanc aquam.*"

III.

Let us stop now and see if the world would not have profited of the Saviour's conduct with the Samaritan.

The world, enveloped as it is in the thick darkness of matter, is but little capable, it is true, of practising the heroic virtues of Christianity. Chastity, the mortification of the senses, the renunciation of self, are almost unknown to it; but there is one virtue at least to which it is not a stranger, and with which it is often familiar—charity to the poor. For do we not daily see many worldly souls, fascinated by the vanities of earth, and knowing little of the holy practices of Christianity, yet consecrating a part of their life to charitable works, assisting the infant in its crib, the orphan in its asylum, the old man on his bed of pain? This charity thus purely material, is far from being sufficient, it is true; far from sufficing the

poor, who live not by bread alone;* far, above all, from sufficing the charitable soul herself; for it is little to love the poor if we love not God; it is little to serve the poor if we serve not the God of the poor. And yet these works have pleaded for those who performed them, and their alms shall not be without fruit. How will they be recompensed?

Jesus Christ teaches us in His Gospel that it is He Himself whom we nourish, feed, and console in the person of the poor and lowly. Why, then, may I not suppose that it is Jesus Christ who, under this appearance, presents Himself daily to those charitable hearts that are in the world, saying to them, as to the Samaritan, "Give me to drink, give me to eat?" And, oh! if their charity does not refuse Him an alms, why should He be less prodigal with them than He was with the Samaritan? Why will He not say to them, as to her, "If you knew who it is that asketh an alms, you would demand of me to eat, and I would give you the bread of life. That which you give me cannot satisfy hunger, but

* Matt. iv. 4.

the bread which I will give communicateth life for ever?"*. . . And at this divine language why should not the world be moved with the same desire as the Samaritan, and answer with her, "Lord, give me then this bread?". . . Ah! were it so, charity would have caused the world to take the first step towards the Eucharist.

IV.

But the holy desire that the Samaritan manifests, and which is the fruit of her charity, is not enough to put her in possession of the gift of God; she opposes yet two obstacles, which separate her invincibly from it—corruption of heart, and ignorance of mind.

Corruption of heart. When Jesus Christ, to unveil her to herself, and to constrain her to an avowal, tells her to call her husband, she answers, "I have none;" and then Jesus Christ, searching the darkness of that wicked conscience, laying open to her that hideous wound which grew old in her silence,† adds, "Thou hast said well, I have no husband,

* John vi. 52. † Psalm xxxi, 3.

for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast, is not thy husband."* Sinful as she is, how can she know the gift of God? . . .

It matters not; she has sinned much, but if her repentance be sincere, all will be forgiven her. Having offended much, if now she loves much, all will be pardoned. The revelation of her iniquities has conquered her. She does not incline her heart to evil words to make excuses for her sin;† on the contrary, she acknowledges the power of Him who speaks: "Lord, I see that Thou art a prophet—*Domine video quia propheta es tu.*"

But to impurity of life she joins ignorance of mind, either imbued with the errors of the sect to which she belongs, or perhaps foolishly endeavouring to convict Him of error who had convinced her of sin; we might imagine she wished to enter into controversy with the Saviour, for she says, "Our fathers adored on this mountain, and you say that at Jerusalem is the place where men must adore." Here, again,

* John iv. 17, 18. † Psalm cxl. 4.

how far is she from knowing the gift of God!

But Jesus, who, like the good shepherd, never loses sight of His wandering sheep, who follows them in all the paths where they stray. amid all the thorns that pierce them, Jesus does not disdain, after having purified this soul, to instruct it, and laying down before her the sublime principle of the true religion, making her see light, in light itself;* He says to her, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true adorer shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth; . . . God is a spirit, and they who adore Him must adore Him in spirit and in truth."†

The Samaritan listens to His instructions with docility, as she had received His reproof with humility. Her mind is open to light, as her heart to repentance; and as in the revealer of her faults she recognized a prophet, so in Him who instructs her she discovers the Doctor of nations. And because without faith in the Divine Messiah, no one

* Psalm xxxv. 10. † John iv. 23, 24.

can be justified and saved,* because without this gift it is impossible to please God,† or receive His rewards, the Samaritan hesitates not; and in the name of believing Judea, and of the Gentiles who believed not, and of whom she was a figure, and to confound in all ages to come the incredulous Jews, she proclaims, in the face of heaven and earth, the belief she had received with her people: "I know," said she, "that the Messiah cometh (who is called Christ), therefore when He is come He will tell us all things." Jesus Christ waited only for this, to reveal Himself entirely to her. "Jesus saith to her, I am He who am speaking with thee."... Happy soul, and ever blessed, now she knows the gift of God; she possesses it; and because she has chosen it, it shall not be taken from her.‡

V.

Now let us return to that world of which the Samaritan is a figure. Already it is true, the exercise of charity may

* Gal. iii. 8. † Heb. xi. 6. ‡ Luke x. 42.

have awakened in it the desire of the Eucharist; but, like the Samaritan, the world opposes two obstacles to the possession of this gift of God, obstacles of the heart and of the mind.

Obstacles of the heart, which, even without being perverted, is scarcely ever pure enough to taste the delights of the Eucharist; it is the pure heart that has for its friend the divine King of our Altars.* It is the clean heart that resteth on His holy hill, and dwelleth in His Tabernacle; and the world gives itself up to profane pleasures, is domineered over by self-love and the senses; it is full of those scandals of which Jesus has said, "Woe to the world because of scandals."† How, then, shall it love the Eucharist? What union can there be between Jesus Christ and Belial; between the temple of God and the abode of idols?‡ Can we drink at once of the chalice of Jesus and the cup of devils?§

But this is not all; the depravity of the world clouds its understanding with

* Prov. xxii. 11. † Matt. xviii. 7.
‡ 2 Cor. vi. 15. § 1 Cor. x. 21.

darkness, its levity fascinates it, and the bewitching of its vanities obscures the good things of Heaven.* For truth is like God, who is seen only by the clean of heart. The spirit of the world understands not the spirit of the gospel; to him who adopts the maxims of the age, the Christian doctrine becomes a sealed book; and the understanding, having no longer a guide, wanders from error to doubt, from doubt to indifference. It cannot know the gift of God.

Behold the two-fold obstacle, but how shall it be removed?

We have seen that Jesus Christ conceals Himself, under the appearance of the poor, to demand from the world material bread, and promises, in return, the bread of Heaven. And does He not daily present Himself to the children of the world, hidden in His ministers, the priests of His Church? He is seated again on the well of Jacob, which was at once a symbol of the salutary *piscina*, where are washed away all our stains; and of the chair of truth whence gush the rivers of His divine

* Wis. iv. 12.

word; and there He waits for the poor Samaritans, who come to draw water at broken cisterns.

Immortal souls, given up to the world, if you meet the priest in your way, hear him as the Samaritan heard Jesus Christ. The priest will not, like Him, read the depths of your consciences; he will wait patiently for you; but if you lay at his feet the avowal of your faults, if you break the silence that aggravates them and prevents their pardon, he will receive you with so paternal a tenderness, he will mingle so many tears with yours, and the counsels that he will give you will be so wise, the words that he will say will be so justly the consolation of your sorrows, his pious influence so much the star that will illumine your path, that you will also be forced to cry out: "I see that thou art a prophet—*Video quia propheta es tu.*"

And then he will breathe into your ear the truth that he has received to transmit to you; he will instruct you in our divine precepts, always so sweet, even when they appear most painful; he will

preach to you the cross, always so wise, even in its folly; and he will teach you our mysteries, which are obscure only because they are suited to God's understanding, not ours. Above all, he will initiate you into the mystery of the Eucharist: he will say to you, The hour is come (for eighteen hundred years has it been here) when the true adorers of Jesus Christ adore Him in every tabernacle and upon every altar; for it was He Himself, who on the eve of His death, taking bread in His hands, said, "This is my body"*—what body but that flesh of which it is written, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us?"† what Word, except Him of whom it was said, "In the beginning . . . . the Word was God?‡ This is my body. The Word was made flesh. In the beginning the Word was God." Either these three gospel sentences ranged thus together are a mockery, or Jesus Christ is present on our altar.

Ah! I do not despair that, absolved by the priest, instructed by his word, you will fall at the foot of the altar,

* Matt. xxvi. 26. † John i. 14. ‡ John i. 1.

saying with great faith, "I know the divine Messiah, Jesus Christ, is there." If these are your dispositions, come to Him; fear not; receive Him in holy communion, and then in very truth I say to you, you shall possess the gift of God. And when returning to your homes you experience a joy unknown to you, a peace that had fled from you, and a wordless felicity that will seem a foretaste of Heaven, you will not be surprised at it, for you will say, "It is because now I know the gift of God."

VI.

When Jesus Christ said to the Samaritan, at the beginning of that heavenly conversation, "If thou didst know the gift of God," He expressed in her regard an ardent desire; and faithful to the divine impulse that pressed her, the Samaritan knew the gift of God. I find in the holy Scripture another sentence of our Lord analogous to this, but which, instead of rejoicing the soul and giving it hope, saddens and terrifies it. It is that which Jesus Christ pronounced shortly before His passion, when He

wept over the rebellious Jerusalem: "Oh! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not! . . . Oh! if thou hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace! but now they are hidden from thy eyes."*

"If thou hadst known the things that are for thy peace." . . . Was it not as if He had said, "If thou didst know the gift of God?" But the conduct of Jerusalem was very different from that of the Samaritan. When Jesus Christ, wearied with the labours of His life and the torments of His passion, amid the agony of Calvary and the pangs of the cross, again demanded to drink ("I thirst—*sitio*"), Jerusalem, instead of drawing water for Him from the fountain, presented Him with vinegar and gall; instead of saying to Him, with confidence and repentance, "I see that thou art a prophet—*Video quia*

* Matt. xxiii. 37 and Luke xix. 42.

propheta es tu," Jerusalem struck Him on the face, with these insulting words: "Prophesy unto us, O Christ! who it is that struck Thee."* Instead of prostrating at His feet, and adoring Him in these terms, "I know that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jerusalem nailed Him to the cross, and then, in her awful audacity, said to Him, "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross, and I will believe in Thee."

Ah! and Jesus Christ, casting upon her a look, of pity, it is true, but at the same time of just indignation, pronounced upon her this sentence: "Now these things are hidden from thy eyes." . . . "For the days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee . . . and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee; and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone."

O world! O world! Wilt thou imitate Jerusalem or the Samaritan? Ah! how many times has Jesus wished to gather thy children together under His

* Matt. xxvi. 68.

divine wings, and thou wouldst not! . . . How many times has He offered thee peace, and thou hast rejected it! But woe to thee, for the days shall come upon thee; the days of threatening are at hand. Have not thy enemies dug their trenches about thee? Art thou not threatened, and thy children in thee, in all that is most dear and sacred to thee? . . . And oh! in thy society, which they are overturning, they will not leave stone upon stone. . . . Decide, then, on the choice thou wilt make. Choose between the gift of God and ruin. Choose between the gift of God and slavery. Choose between the gift of God and barbarism. O world! O world! wilt thou never be led to know, to prefer, to taste the gifts of God?

THE HIDDEN GOD.

Vere tu es Deus absconditus, Deus Salvator.

Verily thou art a hidden God, O God Saviour!—*Isaiah* xlv. 15.

I.

Among the mysteries of Christianity there is one more obscure, perhaps, than

all the others, and yet the sweetest of them all. We might call it darkness, but it is a splendour of which we may say, "Night shall be my light in my pleasures—*Nox illuminatio mea in deliciis meis.*"* We might name it impenetrable silence, and yet of it it is written, "How sweet are Thy words to my palate! more than honey to my mouth —*Quam dulcia faucibus meis eloquia tua, super mel ore meo.*"† We might deem it inaction and death; and it is a life so divine that he who possesses it cries out, "I live now; not I, but Christ liveth in me—*Vivo jam, non ego; vivit vero in me Christus.*"‡

This mystery our hearts have divined and named; it is the holy Eucharist; it was of this mystery of love that Isaiah said, "Thou art truly a hidden God, O God Saviour!—*Vere tu es Deus absconditus, Deus Salvator.*"

But the more it seems that this God of love seeks to conceal from us His glory, the more I endeavour to penetrate the mystery where so much sweetness is hidden; the more the Eucharist

* Ps. cxxxviii. 11. † Ps. cxviii. 103. ‡ Gal. ii. 20.

is obscure, the more I love to surround it with sparkling lights, with beauteous flowers, with precious metals: the silence of the Eucharist moves me to encompass it with joyous canticles; and this secret of my faith prompts my love to reveal it to every heart.

What, then, is this secret?

I come to-day, O Lord! like a little child, feeding my soul with this hidden bread, and with the milk from Thy maternal bosom. I come to ask of Thee why so much mystery in this aliment so sweet, and why so much sweetness in this mystery so obscure? It is from the Eucharist the answer is received.

"Do not consider me that I am brown, because the sun hath altered my colour —*nolite me considerare, quod fusca sum, quia decoloravit me sol.*"*

What sun, if not, as St. Bernard expounds it, the sun of love? "*Decolorari a sole est liquescere charitate.*"

Yes, that is true; through love Jesus Christ hides himself in the Eucharist. But I persist and demand again, why

* Cant. i. 5.

does the love of Jesus Christ induce Him to conceal Himself under these veils?

I ask, and instead of pursuing the thought, I should leave each soul to answer for herself; for every one knows in his own heart why Jesus has prepared for him the Eucharist; this is for him his most profound and dearest secret. *Secretum meum mihi, secretum meum.**

Yet will I strive to say what I can of this mystery. Would that my words were but the echo of the pious thoughts that fill the loving soul.

II.

If Jesus Christ hides Himself in the Eucharist, it is, first, to abide more intimately in us; second, to act more efficaciously by us; third, to reveal Himself more manifestly in us.

1. To abide more intimately in us.

The fact which certainly commands in the moral world, and gives to humanity its true character of greatness, is the society of man with God.

* Isaiah xxiv. 16.

What is man isolated from God? His body is like the grass of our fields, which is green in the morning and parched and withered before night; his soul is a breath which passes, his life a vapour which is lost in the air. Approaching to God, man rises and is elevated; his soul is the image of the Divinity; his body, his organs, his senses are only the faithful and docile servants of the soul, aiding in the support and development of its faculties. Hence, between God and man there are close and reciprocal bonds. Man at his birth comes forth from the hands of God; at his death he returns to the bosom of God. His life passes between these two terms; it is a path leading from God to God; consequently his first duty is to remain closely united to Him from whom he comes and to whom he goes. And the immense goodness of God consists in favouring this union, in leading man back to it when he strays from it, and in drawing it closer and closer by the inventions of His love. Religion is nothing but a history of these divine inventions.

From the beginning of the world the eternal Word enters into relations with man. He communicates Himself to his understanding; He instructs him in the truths he ought to believe, in the virtues he ought to practise, but He has not yet descended to him; He dwells far above him, in the lofty heights of heaven; He has not yet become for man the hidden bread which is his food: He is rather the voice of the Lord that shaketh the desert and that breaketh cedars.*

He is the God of whom it is written that "The Lord is great and exceedingly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods."†

This first bond did not satisfy His love. Having dwelt long above, He now desires to abide with us; He becomes incarnate; He is made man. Oh! how much closer is this bond, how much more full of charms this union! And why? Because, in becoming incarnate, the Divinity hath done two things equally necessary for us, and sweet to our hearts: He hath concealed Himself,

* Psalm xxviii. 5. † Ibid. xcv. 4.

and drawn near to us. If He had drawn near without concealing Himself, my eyes would have been dazzled; if He had gone from me in concealing Himself, I should have known Him less, and hence have forgotten to love Him; but He conceals Himself and draws near. He conceals Himself, and being thus enabled to contemplate Him, I rejoice in the shadow of His veils; He draws near to me, and my soul clings closely to Him. "*In velamento alarum tuarum exultabo : adhæsit anima mea post te.*"*

Sacred veils of the incarnation, adorable body of my Saviour, divine hands that have so often blessed me, divine feet that are weary in running after me, sacred heart that has so much loved me, oh, how dear are you to me!

The Lord was great, says St. Bernard, and greatly to be praised. He became little and greatly to be loved. "*Magnus Dominus et laudabilis nimis, parvus Dominus et amabilis nimis.*"

Born at Bethlehem, and slumbering in the lap of Mary, He seems to me

* Psalm lxii. 8, 9.

more lowly than in His ineffable generation; therefore I love Him. Labouring with Joseph in the workshop of Nazareth, He seems to me more lost to sight than when fashioning the world with His divine hands; therefore I love Him. Served by Martha, loved and adored by Mary in the house of Lazarus, He seems to me more obscure than dwelling in the heavens, served by angels, and adored by the seraphim; therefore I love Him. Sad and suffering in His passion, dying upon a cross, He seems to me more abandoned than living and reigning with His Father and the Holy Ghost from all eternity; therefore I love Him. *Parvus Dominus et amabilis nimis.*

But if Jesus Christ hides Himself so profoundly in the incarnation, how shall He conceal Himself more? If He approaches me so nearly, taking a flesh like mine, how can He draw nearer? Yet, oh! He will do it, and this is the last invention of His love. He hides Himself under the appearance of my daily bread; He draws nigh unto me, becoming my daily food; He annihilates Himself still more, and hence is more

worthy of my love. "*Parvus Dominus et amabilis nimis.*" More lowly under the figure of bread than under the figure of man, more concealed in the tabernacle than at Bethlehem, the humiliation of the cross is consummated on the altar; and yet more! His divinity is effaced in my heart.

My heart. There is the cradle where He reposes, the workshop where He labours, the country wherein He dwells, the Calvary wherein He is immolated, the tomb wherein He is buried; nowhere is He so little as in my heart, and hence nowhere so greatly to be loved, and nowhere do I love Him so much. "*Parvus Dominus et amabilis nimis.*"

And this bond which He contracts with me unites Him equally to all those who approach the Holy Table. His mortal life was confined within the narrow limits of a small country, and the short space of thirty-three years. His Eucharistic life extends from pole to pole, and lasts till time shall end. During His mortal life few saw Him, very few conversed with Him and received Him into their house. His

Eucharistic life belongs to all men; from age to age generations pass away, yet each in its sojourn here finds the God of the Eucharist in the tabernacle and on the altar. Thus this God so profoundly hidden is most closely united to us. "*Deus absconditus, Deus Salvator.*"

III.

2. Jesus Christ conceals Himself to act more efficaciously by us.

For Jesus Christ comes only to act. Our heart is not a solitary throne which He chooses for His repose; He reposes there, but only to transform it; He abides there, but it is to render it better; and He passes through it only doing good.*

Let us now see how the Holy Eucharist is for us so powerful a means of action.

Between the action of God and that of man there is this difference: that man acts ordinarily on his fellow-man only by exterior means, and the stronger these means are, the more powerful the

* Acts x. 38.

action; that of God, on the contrary, is more energetic in proportion as it is interior and hidden.

God certainly acts upon man by the exterior spectacle of His works, by the succession of the events of time; He also acts upon him by His word which resounds in his ear, by the holy examples He places before his eyes. But these exterior means are nothing if the interior and hidden action does not animate and vivify them: this action is that of grace.

It has pleased the goodness of God to conceal His richest treasures of grace under the sensible sign of the Eucharistic bread, and thereby to inclose therein His most powerful means of action. Hence the Eucharist has ever been in the Church the most life-giving source of the sanctification of her children. It is the Eucharist that has in all ages given birth to martyrs, confessors, and virgins. It is the Eucharist which allows us to draw on the richest treasures of God. It is the Eucharist that instructs us in the most sublime ways of virtue; under the silent veils that cover

it, it has an inimitable eloquence that human speech cannot attain, and which teaches us secrets that human words were vain to utter.

Pious souls, whoever you may be, I do not fear to address you these questions: Before you knew and tasted the Eucharist, what did you know? And since it has become familiar to you, of what are you ignorant? Before having drunk of the wine that makes virgins, did you know chastity? Before having eaten that mysterious bread, where God annihilates Himself, did you know humility? Before having united yourself to the divine Victim of Calvary, did you know patience? Before having taken part in this festival of love, did you know charity? But since the Eucharist has become your frequent food, of what are you ignorant in its divine teachings? Of what are you ignorant in those high paths by which holy souls rise from virtue to virtue? Ah! Baptism has made us Christians; Confirmation, perfect Christians; the Eucharist alone can make us Saints.

But while the Eucharist teaches us

everything. oh! how sweet and amiable are its teachings! and how easy does it render the fulfilment of duty! Speedily will you recognize a soul whom the Eucharist has instructed.

In fact, I should sometimes be tempted to believe there were two sorts of Christianity: one where the commandments are always painful, the yoke always hard, the burden always heavy; the other where the precepts are easy, the yoke sweet, and the burden ever light. The first is the Christianity of those who know not the Eucharist, and the second that of pious souls who love and frequent the Holy Table.

Put before two souls, the one loving the Eucharist, and the other not loving it, place before them the same precept, the same counsel, the same virtue, the same good work: where the second will hesitate, the first will be ready; where the second will walk staggering, the other will fly; where the second will make shipwreck, the first will advance, with full sails, and enter the port. Behold, then, the power of the Eucharist, a power which is owing to the divine

and hidden grace that it pours upon us. Hidden and mysterious God, truly Thou art the Saviour of our souls.

IV.

3. In fine, Jesus Christ hides Himself in the Eucharist to reveal Himself in us.

The Eucharist is assuredly a profound mystery. Christian faith alone can penetrate its thick darkness, and contemplate the Eternal hidden under a little bread; but with the mystery comes its revelation. Jesus Christ hides Himself under the Eucharistic veils, but He reveals Himself in each one of us who receives this Sacrament. He seems to annihilate Himself there, only to revive in us, and to multiply thus in the person of the Christian, the manifestation of His works.

We have seen above, that Jesus Christ came upon earth only to unite us more closely to Himself, and in consequence of this union to render us participant of His nature; He wishes to live again in all Christians who are His children, that as the old Adam was

perpetuated in all men who were become sinners, so He who is the New Adam might equally continue in the Christian generations, sanctified and renewed by Him. It is by the Eucharist Jesus Christ attains this end.

"There is this difference," says a holy Father, "between the material bread that nourishes the body and the Eucharistic aliment: the first, inferior to man who feeds upon it, is transformed into his substance; while the Eucharistic bread, more noble than the soul that receives it, draws it, and changes it into itself. Thus material bread becomes ourselves, and we, on the contrary, in receiving the Eucharist, become another Jesus Christ. But Jesus Christ is hidden in the Eucharist, and we, having now become Himself, are bound to reveal and manifest Him by our works. Let us examine what this mystery conceals of the Saviour's mortal life, for it is this we must manifest in our lives."

When Jesus Christ appeared in this world, He manifested Himself by His exterior form, by His words, and by His

actions ; these, then, are the things we must revive in us.

First, the exterior form of the Saviour, so amiable, so meek, that to express the Incarnation the Apostle employed this simple word, " Goodness appeared."*

When Jesus Christ entered on His public life, an inexpressible charm drew all men to Him ; a single look decided His Apostles to follow Him, or brought back repentance to the heart of Simon Peter. In fine, they accused Him of seducing the people whom He converted.

Who will give us to reproduce in ourselves the meek and gentle exterior of Jesus Christ, so that the world seeing us may say, Goodness has appeared—*Benignitas apparuit?* In fact, the piety of a soul devoted to the Eucharist should, above all things. be amiable. In her a modesty full of charms should, with a frank simplicity, seduce to convert ; whoever she be, she should shed abroad that perfume of virtue which is the good odour of Jesus Christ.†

Secondly, we should reproduce His word, that word which changed the

* Tit, iii. 4. † 2 Cor, ii. 15.

world, which is for the understanding, the preaching of the highest truths, and for the heart the expression of the sublimest morality.

The Eucharist is silent, yes, undoubtedly ; but we have seen that this silence is éloquence ; it has an interior language for the soul, and it is ours to give exterior utterance to the words of our Divine Master. Priests and faithful, we are all Apostles ; we all owe to our brethren those holy conversations that animate, that console, that implant truth in the mind, and virtue in the heart.

Nevertheless, is is specially to the priest, and I do not forget it, that the ministry of the word is confided, and I thank the Lord that He has given also to us the ministry of the Eucharist. Yes, it is because the priest daily ascends the steps of the Altar, that he can every day be seated in the chair of truth ; it is because daily he holds his God in his hands, that he becomes at the same time His most faithful interpreter ; it is because the Eucharist is on his lips, the burning coal of Isaiah, that his heart is pure enough to preach the gospel.

Happy the priest who, in publishing it, can say, my heart does but utter the good word it has received in Him—*eructavit cor meum, verbum bonum.**

Thirdly; in fine, we should reproduce the actions of Jesus Christ, actions which were ever the most sublime practices of virtue. The Eucharist conceals a God, who ever showed Himself to the world humble, chaste, patient, charitable. Now, this divine life is buried in mystery, but this mystery expects a revelation, and this revelation is to be found in the life of each one of us. It is not enough that the Eucharist acts upon our own soul and sanctifies it; it is necessary also that the world see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven.

Here no expression gives my thought better than one which I borrow from the holy writings: "It is good to hide the secret of the king, but it is glorious to reveal the works of God."†

The secret of the king, and the works of God. The Eucharist is expressed in these two words.

* Psalm xliv. 2. † Tob. xii. 7.

The secret is confided to us with its inexpressible sweetness : let us guard it preciously in the depths of our soul ; let us fear that this hidden flower, if it opens in the broad glare of day, may lose something of its freshness and its perfume ; but let us at the same time remember that the Eucharist obliges us to show in our actions the works of Gòd. The continuation of these works constitutes the Christian life, and the reception of the Blessed Eucharist should tend to augment their number, renewing their brilliancy and splendour.

Oh ! how important is this doctrine, and how frequently should we meditate upon it ! The Eucharist is a mystery; the life and virtues of every Christian are its revelation. He who does not believe, and sees in the Sacrament of our Altars only a little bread, should be constrained to acknowledge and adore God in the lives of those who receive it. Admiring in each one of us an ever-indulgent goodness, an unchanging meekness, an ardent charity, he should be forced to say, "Behold another Jesus Christ, not now Jesus Christ hidden,

but such as he appeared to the world—*Christianus alter Christus.*"

V.

Let us love, then, this hidden God, this mysterious aliment, since it unites us so closely to Jesus. Let us love it, since it has so much power over our souls; but, above all, let us never forget that Jesus hides and annihilates Himself only that we may make Him revive in us. The Christian is another Jesus Christ—*Christianus alter Christus.*

Thus we shall merit that this Divine Master, after having manifested Himself in our lives by the practice of Christian virtues on earth, may reveal Himself eternally to us and in us, by the gift of His glory in heaven. Amen.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

Fame pereo.
I perish with hunger.—*Luke* xv. 17

I.

Which of us has not read and meditated the parable of the prodigal son? Which of us has not wept over his wan-

derings and rejoiced at his happy return? Above all, is there one among us that has not thanked Jesus Christ for having let fall from His divine lips words so fitted to teach all sinners repentance, and indulgence to all those who receive repentant sinners?

I meditated on this touching story, but it was at the foot of the Altar, in presence of the tabernacle; and there, as I asked myself whence arose the misfortune of the youngest of the two sons, it seemed to me that his first fault had been to abandon the modest table of his father's house, and seek elsewhere more of pomp and luxury, yielding to the gratification of his grosser appetite. Then when I enquired how the prodigal son, thus fallen into the abyss of misery, expressed the horrors of his situation, I heard him utter this cry of anguish, "I die of hunger—*fame pereo.*" Finally, when I examined how the father received his son after the wanderings that he had forgiven him, I saw prepared the fatted calf, and the happy festal. . . Ah! was not this enough to fix my thoughts? What needed I more to convince me

that in this gospel narrative there is a reference to the Eucharist?

But it is true, O Lord, that when I read the holy books this thought never abandons me. The Eucharist ! . . . It is ever before my eyes ; I seek it in every part of the sacred writings. The word that reminds me of it is that which I know best, the passage that refers to it is that which I meditate always ; . . . . or, rather, I do not seek, I do not ask, is the Eucharist here, is it there, but every one of these divine pages is for me a limpid crystal, through which beams ever the Eucharist.

II.

Let us now endeavour to develop the thoughts that have been suggested by this parable.

"A certain man had two sons : and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me of the portion of substance that belongeth to me. And he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after, the younger son, gathering all together, went abroad into a far country."*

* Luke xv.

Before following him in this long journey, let us first behold him in his father's house.

Ah! was he not happy there? There, as we learn from the same evangelical account, he was always with his father,* and all that father had belonged to him :† there even the hired servants were filled with bread. If the hirelings, how much more the son? Is not this father's house that of which it is written elsewhere, "Wisdom hath built herself a house ; . . . . she hath slain her victims, mingled her wine, set forth her table ; . . . . and she hath said, Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine I have mingled for you?"‡ Sacred house, where divine wisdom presides, and where the table always set is the Eucharist. There our heart is filled, not with the bread of hirelings, but of angels ; there we are always with Jesus, our true Father, and He communicates to us all the wealth of His riches—*omnia mea tua sunt.*

* Ibid. xv. 31. † Ibid.
‡ Prov. ix. 1-6

III.

But these blessings do not satisfy the prodigal, and he asks of his father the portion of inheritance that belongeth to him.

Strictly speaking, nothing belonged to him; for what have we that we have not received, not from the justice, but from the goodness of God?* Nevertheless, it is true to say, that the inheritance of every man coming into this world, is divided into two *parts:* the one comprehends all goods purely natural; as, first, those which compose our being; the faculties of soul and body; then, in the intellectual order, human arts and sciences; and, in fine, riches, pleasures, honour, and glory. This portion the world claims, and God gives it up to it; and it is this portion also that the father abandons to the prodigal. But there is another, which is composed of all the riches of grace and glory; one of which the prophet writes: "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my chalice"† Of my inheritance and of

* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

† Psalm xv. 5.

my chalice, as if he had said: The inheritance I have received from the Lord, is His chalice; that chalice so inebriating and so goodly;* the chalice of the Eucharist. Ah! this portion, the most precious, the world disdains; the prodigal does not ask it.

Lo! he is started, he is hurrying to that distant country, which is the world; so much the more distant as it strays farther from Jesus Christ. He is rich, he is powerful, he is adorned with all the splendour of human sciences, surrounded by all the happiness of human affections; does he want for any thing? Yes, one thing, and it is that of which it is written, it is the one thing necessary:† the bread of the soul, the daily bread, the bread which he has renounced; and, therefore, when in a very short time his riches are squandered, his power crushed, his vain philosophy and science have left but a void, his heart deceived in all its affections, he discovers that all he possesses is only vanity of vanities, and that he is without the one thing necessary; then what

* Ps. xxii. 5. † Luke x. 42.

exhausts, terrifies, and crushes him, is not poverty, nor weakness, nor ignorance, nor abandonment by creatures, but hunger: "I die of hunger," says he, "I die of hunger—*fame pereo.*"

Yet he is in the midst of the world, of the world rich like himself, powerful, learned, honoured, and loved like himself; and to the world he applies for relief; but alas! what he has not, the world is also without; and what devours his life is also preying upon that of the world. There was, says the gospel, a mighty famine in that country—*facta est fames valida in regione illa.* And everywhere from its surface arose that cry of distress; "I die of hunger, I die of hunger—*fame pereo.*"

Oh! is it not true that there is a mighty famine on the earth? Let us cast our eyes over the world. Where holy Church flourishes, where the Catholic faith is preserved, where hearts are still fervent, there doubtless is distributed our daily bread; but what is that to the entire world?—"*hæc quid sunt inter tantos!*" And, besides, how many vast provinces, how many king-

doms and empires, where the divine banquet is never prepared, where never a priest pronounces these words: "This is My body, this is My blood!" They may be rich, they may have every thing else in abundance; but yet, and surely, they are dying of hunger; and the soul deprived of this divine food, this sacred nourishment, faints for virtue, faints for chastity, faints for humility, faints for all that forms the moral life of individuals and peoples.

I take you to witness, oh! faithful and fervent souls who love the Eucharist, is not its privation a hunger that devours and kills? For you to possess the Eucharist is to live; and not to feed upon it, is to die. You may be poor, deprived of all the benefits of fortune, but if you have the Eucharist, you swim in abundance; and deprived of it, though surrounded by all the appliances of wealth, you are forced to cry out, like the poorest poor, "I die of hunger —*fame pereo!*"

IV.

But let us see to what depth of misery the prodigal is reduced. He hires him-

self to a master who destines him for the vilest employments, and all his ambition, all his desire, is to nourish himself with the food of swine.

A fearful chastisement, and one whose teaching is so profound, that we cannot too much endeavour to fill our minds with it. For human nature there are only two nourishments—the Eucharist, or the food of swine. Man has no medium; either heaven or mire; either the Bread of Angels or the food of infamous pleasures. And the reason is, that in his present state of nature, fallen by sin and regenerated by Jesus Christ, man can only be, so to speak, above or below himself. Above, by the grace of God; below, by sin. Supported by the wings of divine grace, he takes his flight like the eagle; crushed by sin, he grovels on the earth like an unclean animal; and hence—oh! we know it well—when we are truly Christian, faithful observers of the holy law, material bread is not enough for us, we live no longer by it alone:* become more like angels than human beings, we can say with the hea-

* Matt. iv. 4.

venly spirit that conducted Tobias, I appear to eat like other men, but my food is an invisible bread,* the Eucharist; and, on the contrary, if we are sinners if we abandon the precepts of our God, let us not think we can stop at the entrance of the abyss; we are forced to seek food for the hunger that devours us; we are forced to beg crumbs at the door of a cruel master; we are forced to feed on the husks of swine.

V.

We have meditated the faults and misery of the prodigal; let us now consider his return.

As soon as he began to enter into himself, his first word was, "In my father's house, how many hirelings have bread in abundance, while here I perish of hunger;" and then he added, "I will arise and go to my father, and I will say, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no longer worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants."

* Tob. xii. 19.

I have great confidence in the repentance of that sinner whose first accent is of regret for being deprived of the Eucharist, and who, counting as nothing the frivolous advantages of the world, envies the lot of his poorest brethren, because they are seated at the holy table, and have bread in abundance; and I am sure he will arise and go with confidence to His Father, if he expects from Him this divine yet daily bread; and most bitter will be the repentance with which he will say, "I have sinned," if this repentance is to prepare his heart to become the tabernacle of his God. How profound a humility will speak in these words, "I am not worthy," if he pronounces them at the foot of the altar! A boundless confidence, a sincere repentance, a deep humility, these are certainly the conditions of a true repentance; but it is the Eucharist which creates and strengthens them in our heart. The goodness of the God of the Eucharist inspires confidence, His sanctity awakens repentance, His majesty and power excite humility. Hence, not the least triumph of the Eucharist is

that crowd of penitents it draws daily to the sacred tribunal.

When the days of our solemnities come round, how many Christians rise like the prodigal son, repeating with him, "I will go to my Father," and striking their breasts at the door of the blessed confessional, they cry out with the accent of sorrow: "I have sinned, I am not worthy to be called a child of God." Why this compunction? why this humble avowal of their faults? Because they wish on this feast-day to be seated at the heavenly banquet, and feed on that celestial food whose privation is death; because they also have said: "How many hirelings in the house of God have bread in abundance, and I die of hunger!" Their feet are again in the path that leads to God, their soul is purified; but who shall say if it is more by the ardour of penance, than by the sacred fire of the Eucharist?

VI.

Animated, then, by the desire of the Eucharist, and by repentance for his sins, the prodigal, rising up, went to

his father. "And when he was yet afar off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion, and running to him, fell upon his neck and kissed him." This was not all: he called his servants and said to them, "Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it upon him, and put a ring on his finger, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry. Because this my son was dead, and is come to life again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."*

Oh! let us dwell on this touching scene; but leaving the figure, let us turn to the reality. Who is this tender Father of the prodigal? who, O my God, but Thyself? . . . . Thou, the true Father of my wandering soul, who, when we were afar off, didst preach peace unto us,† who before all time dsdst say of us Thy prodigal children, "I have loved you with an everlasting love;"‡ "and when you were enslaved in the chains of Adam, have drawn you by the bands of love;"§ Thou, who to

* Luke xv. † Ephes. ii. 17. ‡ Jerem. xxxi. 3.
§ Osee xi. 4.

reach us, clearing space, like a giant* leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills,† hast descended from heaven to earth, and hast passed, in seeking for us, from Bethlehem to Nazareth, from Nazareth to Cana, to Capharnaum, to Samaria; wherever we were with our miseries and faults, thou hast hastened after us; warming thus humanity in Thy divine embraces, Thou didst give it the kiss of peace, in which it still rejoices; Thou, in fine, who, immolated on Calvary, comparing Thyself to the fatted calf of sacrifice, and to the lamb that is slain, has deigned to become our nourishment, and our festival at the Eucharistic Table, demanding no other recompense, for all Thy labours, for all Thy words, for all Thy works, for all Thy sufferings, than the happiness of being able to say—My children were dead, and they are risen, they were lost to Me, and I have found them once more.

Oh! how I love this reconciliation, which began before all time, in the love of the Eternal Word; which was con-

* Ps. xviii. 6. † Cant. ii. 8.

tinued by the Incarnation and the Passion, and which terminates in the Eucharist! .... as if it alone, O my God, could satisfy Thy immense tenderness for man. For, when from the highest heavens Thou bent upon us an eye of pity, Thou even then didst seek us, but Thou hadst not found us. When Thou wert a babe in Bethlehem, and a traveller in Judea, then too didst Thou seek us, but Thou hadst not found us; and when even Thou wert dying for us, Thou didst not behold us at the foot of Thy cross; but when, at last, Thou hast brought us to the Eucharistic banquet; when there, Thou dost rest upon our heart, Thou art sure of us, and Thou sayest with confidence: "My son was dead, but I have raised him, communicating to him My divine life; I lost him in the midst of the world, and I have found him at the Eucharistic Table." Ah! when the prodigal, thus kindly received by his Father, is seated anew at His Table, what happiness is his! He alone can know who has tasted it.

VII.

If there is a Communion in life which inspires the Christian heart with the most profound sentiment of gratitude and of joy, it is certainly that which man has the happiness of making, when, after having long absented himself from the holy Table, he returns at last to God, and is sincerely converted.

When a child, he had received a Christian education, and the first time, at least, he had communicated with fervour and purity of soul; but the simoom of the passions passed over him: a young man, he forgot every thing, neglected every thing, abandoned every thing. We have seen him in the midst of the world; how he let himself be carried away by that devouring tempest; how he became inebriated by the smoke that is breathed there, for the world is only smoke; how he was seduced by the vanity around him, for the world is only vanity; how he seized with ardour the shadows that passed before him, for the world passes like a shadow.

But in this heart, thus poisoned,

where there seems to remain neither faith nor love, God has yet left remembrance and remorse: remembrance of his first Communion; remorse for having so bitterly offended a God, whom he has known only by the delights of the Eucharist.

And this smoking flame shall be rekindled; the flame shall burst forth anew. He remembered his Christian mother—the old servants of his house, who cradled his infancy with the sweet names of Jesus and Mary. He remembered his first prayer—Our Father who art in heaven—and he has said, I will go to my Father. Oh! it was indeed he whom his Father saw afar off, whom He ran to meet, whom He strained in His divine embraces, and of whom He said to His servants, the priests, Clothe him with his first robe of innocence—that which he wore at his baptism; put on his finger the ring of his ancient alliance with Me, for to-day I will place myself as a seal on his arms and on his heart; on his arms to give him strength, on his heart to give him love. Put shoes on his feet, that henceforth he may be like

those who run with a joyful heart in the way of my commandments, and prepare the festival of reconciliation.

And when this beautiful day came, what ravishment in the heart of that generous youth who gave himself wholly to God, and what happiness around him! His mother seeing him advance to the altar, sheds the sweetest tears of her life, and says: "My child was dead, and he is risen; he was lost, and behold he is found." His Christian friends, who had vainly counselled him, and had become sadly estranged from him, now surround him and say, "Our friend was dead, and he is risen; we had lost him, and behold he is found." And in heaven, the angels, who had veiled their faces at the sight of his sins, now regard him with love, singing, in glad chorus, "Our brother was dead and he is risen; he was lost and he is found." But more than his mother, much more than his friends, much more than the angels, Jesus Christ exults in gladness in His divine tabernacle, and resting on his heart, says to him, "My child, My friend, My brother; thou who was dead,

and whom I have raised to life; thou who was lost and whom I have found, be filled, be inebriated, and let us rejoice together; for, amen, I say to thee there is more joy in heaven over one sinner doing penance than over ninety-nine just, who need not penance."

VIII.

As to us, O Christians, whose lives have passed in the shadow of the sanctuary and the tabernacle—us, to whom Jesus Christ could always say, "All that I have is thine—*omnia mea tua sunt*," let us not imitate the brother of the prodigal, and without fear that the exhaustless riches of the Lord should ever be wanting to us, let us ask Him to pour out upon others the treasures of His mercy; let us ask Him to behold afar off all those young sinners whom we know and whom we love—those poor prodigals, who are indeed in a distant country; let us ask Him to run after them, for in the paths of iniquity where their feet are weary* He alone can reach them; and if He has

* Wisdom v. 7.

not mercy on them they will faint in the way, and will not even have strength to say, "I die of hunger." Let us ask Him to press them tenderly to His bosom and embrace them, for if they have resisted the threats of His justice, they must be subdued by the charms of His love. In fine, let us ask Him to seat them at the heavenly banquet of the Eucharist, that all being risen and all found, all may bless the Father who is in Heaven during time and eternity. Amen.

OUR SWEETEST REMEMBRANCE AND OUR BRIGHTEST HOPE.

Excitus matutini, et vespere delectabis.

Thou shalt make the outgoings of the morning and evening be joyful.—*Psalm* lxiv. 9,

I.

The traveller who climbs a steep mountain often stops in the midst of the ascent, and casting his eyes now over the distance he has gained, and now over that which yet remains to be trod, he

loves to reflect on the impressions he has received and on those which yet await him.

Already he has doubtless been much fatigued; his feet have been bruised by the stones, and his garments torn by the thorns of his way; but then what agreeable remembrances has he gathered—what joys has he tasted! As he ascended, the sky grew more serene, the landscape stretched out before his eye with more loveliness and variety; and if anything more particularly struck him, a more smiling site, a greener meadow, a more limpid stream, it is this picture he keeps most preciously in his memory and loves most to recall.

It is the same as to what lies before him. Without doubt his lassitude will increase and new difficulties await him; but if he is certain of finding at the summit a more glorious view and the repose that he desires, he loves to dwell on it in advance, and starts forward with new courage, animated at once by the remembrance of the past and the hope of the future.

II.

We may say it is thus with ourselves, when towards the middle of our career, stopping by reflection at the point we have attained, we cast our eyes successively on the days gone by and those stretched out before us.

Beginning by our past life, we divide it into two parts—the evil days and the good.

The evil days . . . . Which of us has not known them, and has not learned by prompt experience, that as the bird is born to fly, so is man to labour and to suffer?*

Our life manifested itself by tears, and our earliest infancy passed in weeping; then came the labours of youth, the first deceits and discontents of our early self-love, the first sadness of our soul, which, as soon as it was sensible of existence, saw almost instinctively the difficulties and nothingness of this being. Soon followed those serious labours that overpower the heart: disappointments, reverses, and above all, those cruel losses which nothing can bid us forget. Alas!

* Job v. 7.

how many smiled round our cradle over whose tomb we weep! How many, among the friends and companions of our childhood and youth, have we left by the way! How many who walked behind us in life have preceded us in death! Oh! to suffice for so many sorrows, there was needed only a few years, perhaps a few days.

But if we are Christians, what to us are the sorrows of our past life, compared to the faults we have committed? It is these, above all, that we recall with bitterness. "We know our iniquity, and our sin is always before us."* What have we received from God that we have not defiled? What talents have we not buried, what fruits have we brought forth? Oh! how many of our days would we wish to hide in impenetrable darkness, because we remember them only by the shame and remorse they awaken!

But by the side of these evil days there are some in the past whose memory is sweet unto our heart.

First, some of those few moments of happiness God grants to every one com-

* Psalm l. 5.

ing into this world, that there may be none who cannot say, when he has reached the end, "I have tasted a little honey, and I die."* If infancy has its tears, it has also its sweet joys, when the horizon of life is the family circle, and we know of this world only the father that we venerate and the mother that we love. If youth has its sorrows, it also has its gladness, when the maturing mind forms itself for noble labours and the heart pours itself in holy affections, which promise a serious happiness.

But as for the Christian, his most sorrowful remembrance is that of his faults; so he loves to recall nothing so much as the graces he has received from God. He remembers his first prayer, his first alms, the first day when his Christian mother made him kneel in the sanctuary; or, if he was too young to remember these things, he thinks with deeper gratitude that he never lived without prayer, and without loving God and the poor.

Then, what favours has he received from heaven, as he grew up under the

* 1 Kings xiv. 48.

eye of God! What holy words has he heard! and if he has been faithful, how many good works and precious acts has he done before the Lord! But there is nothing he thinks of with such gratitude, that he loves so to remember, as the Communions he has made. They have been the perfume of his life, and he loves to breathe it. They have been the treasure of his days, and he counts them with holy pride. He does not forget that each one of these Communions has fortified him against some danger, ornamented him with some new virtue, or, at least, made him love it. With what happiness has he ever "approached the Altar of that God who rejoiced his youth."*

Yet it is true to say, that it is with our Communions as with the stars in heaven, of which it is written that they differ in glory.† All possess for us immense riches; but is there not One which has surpassed them all?‡ Yes, as among the joys of this life, we rank highest graces of God, and among these graces, we give the first place to our

* Psalm xlii. 4. † 1 Cor. xv. 41. ‡ Prov. xxvi. 29.

Communions, so among our Communions there is One that we prefer, One to which we always turn, One that is our sweetest remembrance . . . . and this is our first Communion.

III.

Our first Communion! Oh! how were we prepared for it, either by the innocence of our early childhood, or by our first repentance of our faults! . . .

Our first Communion! Then Jesus Christ, entering for the first time into our souls, gave us His first kiss of peace, the first milk from His maternal bosom; then the angels for the first time envied our happiness, asking themselves if it was true that we were created a little below them.* Then the Christian people, surrounding us with holy gladness, sang hosannas, and repeated with the woman of Judea—"Blessed is the womb that bore Jesus Christ!"† . . . . and if they had been silent, the very stones of the sanctuary would have cried out to bless the thrice holy God.‡ Then our

* Psalm viii. 6. † Luke xi. 27. ‡ Ibid. xix. 40.

mothers, forgetting the anguish of child-birth, were full of a holy joy, that there is come into the world,* a man who is made the tabernacle of his God: then our tears were so sweet, our hymns so angelic, our prayers ever heard; then our faith was more lively, our hope more ardent; but, then, above all we loved more. . . . . Before our first Communion every joy is eclipsed, disappearing in the brightness of its glory. Whatever may have been our past pleasures, our honours, our splendours, all vanish before this happiness, and we find truly that our first Communion is like a pearl cast into the ocean of our life. It is, indeed, our sweetest remembrance.

IV.

We have gazed upon the past, let us now turn to the future. In the future we shall likewise find joys and sorrows, fears and hopes, evil and good days.

First, sorrows, fears, and evil days; . . . for as we advance in age, God desires in His mercy that we should detach ourselves from the things of this world,

* John xvi. 21.

which we soon must leave; and as we might be foolish enough to prefer present joys to eternal felicity, He takes from us these joys, or changes them into bitterness. We shall see infirmities waste away our body, and enervate our soul. We shall see, as we have seen, our illusions vanish, but with much more ruin; we shall see our friendships broken, but with much more anguish; so that we shall no longer have to choose between happiness and happiness, but between the numberless evils of this life and the celestial joys that await us.

Yet, as in the past, so in the future, our most poignant sorrows are our faults, and when we gaze on the future with a Christian eye, what we apprehend most is our infidelity.

Yes, Lord, what makes me, the more I advance in life, dread and detest the world, is, that it is not only a soil where germinates every sorrow, as thorns on every path; but it is, moreover, a cursed land, where Thou art ever offended, where the mind is driven about by every wind of doctrine, and where the heart

is corrupted in all its affections; whose inhabitants are weak in every peril, resistless against every seduction, preferring the vanities of a day before Thee, oh! beauty always ancient, and always new.

Thus I shall have in the future many trials to support. Perhaps I shall have the misfortune to commit many faults; and this it is that terrifies me. But, also, how much have I to hope; to what happiness may I not aspire; what good days will compensate these evil ones?

Ah! I no longer bound my desires by earthly goods, human felicities. Past experience has shown me their emptiness, their nothing; yet I feel a tranquil joy, in trusting entirely to the Lord for all that may happen to me, saying, "The Lord conducts me, I shall want for nothing."* Every day I will ask Him for my daily bread, and every day He will give it to me. He who clothes the lily of the field, will clothe me. He who shelters the turtle-dove and the sparrow, will shelter me. This filial confidence appeases all my fears for the future.

* Psalm xxii. 1.

But what my Christian heart expects, and what will not be refused it, is, on the one hand, greater graces from God, and on the other, greater fidelity to His graces. How many holy words shall I yet hear! How many pious and solid lectures are yet to enlighten my understanding! Soon, perhaps, will be heard in the Christian pulpit the word that will strike me most; soon I shall have in my hand the book which will make me most love my God. But above all I will be more faithful; I have prayed much in the past, I will pray more and better in the future; I have endeavoured to do good, I will do so still, but in a more perfect manner; I have laboured in the practice of the Christian virtues, I will continue my efforts, and with greater success. These are the pious hopes which form the charm of my future hours, and gild the horizon of my declining years.

But what is there good in life, and what truly beautiful, save the "wheat of the elect, and the wine that maketh virgins?"* .... Ah! my most certain

* Zacharias ix. 17.

hope rests in the Communions I shall make. Heretofore I have gone up to the Altar of the God who rejoiced my youth; growing old, I shall love to come nigh unto the Altar that renews my youth like the eagle's.* The more I withdraw from human society, the more I will delight in the amiable solitude of the Sanctuary; and as I break my connections with the world, I will strengthen those that unite me to God; as I renounce the affairs of life, I will give myself wholly to the delights of the Eucharist.

Yet if, when I recalled the past, there was one Communion I preferred to all others, and which I named my sweetest remembrance, will it not be the same with my future Communions? is there not one which I may equally distinguish, and which I may denominate my brightest hope? I represent to myself successively the different phases of the years still in store for me, and already in imagination I accompany them by fervent Communions. Of these is there none I would rank higher than the

* Psalm cii. 5.

rest? . . . . Ah! when I think that my life will have a close, and that this close will be the passage from time to eternity, that at this decisive moment I shall have the greatest dangers to fear, but also a nearer crown to expect; when I remember that Thou, O Lord, wilt come to me for the last time in Thy Divine Sacrament, dissipating all my fears, and showing me Thyself, my exceeding great reward, I hesitate no longer, but hasten to declare that my last Communion is my brightest hope.

V.

My last Communion! Ah! it will then no longer be I who shall go to seek my gracious Lord in His holy Temple, but He who will come to visit me on my bed of pain; and if I am poor, He will not disdain to enter my hovel. Oh! how blessed to my soul will be His presence there! On the day of my first Communion, He nourished me like an infant with milk from His breast, and now He will distribute to me the bread of the strong, in the strength of which I shall ascend without weakness the

mountain of God.* On the day of my first Communion He saluted me with the first kiss of peace; and now He will give me the last kiss, that of adieu, before I fall asleep on His bosom. . . . But what will render my last Communion most precious is, that the Eucharistic veils, those veils against which my eyes have so vainly struggled, will be on the point of falling; yet a little time and I shall see my God face to face; yet a little time and I shall possess for ever the beloved of my soul.† He is still behind the walls, but He is opening the windows, He is removing the lattices, that He may look closer upon me.‡

His divine voice vibrates already in my ear, and reaches me as the feeble echo of the voice that I shall hear in heaven. What now are to me the goods and evils of this life? The evils I dread no longer, and the goods I contemn; my last Communion opens my eyes to truth. I fear no longer the horrors of the grave, for the love that unites me to my God is stronger than

* 3 Kings xix. 8. † Cant. iii. 4. ‡ Ibid. ii. 9.

death.* And, with St. Paul, I desire to be dissolved, that I may begin to live eternally with Christ.†

Oh! may these sentiments animate our last moments, and may the Holy Communion come then to strengthen them in our hearts. Is not this the most ardent wish our souls could form? and was I not right in saying that if our first Communion was our sweetest remembrance, our last will be our brightest hope? The one was the precious pearl cast into the ocean of our days, the other will be a star in the zenith of our sky to guide our fragile bark to the haven of safety; and thus it will be true to say, the Lord hath rejoiced the morning and evening of our life: in the morning, since it is to Him my sweetest remembrance is attached; and the evening, because He will then prove my brightest hope—*Exitus matutini, et vespere delectabis.*

VI.

Between, then, these two terms, these two Communions—between this remem-

* Cant. viii. 6. † Phil. i. 23.

brance, and this hope, we will continue to follow the path in which Providence shall lead us.

And let us not forget to be grateful, remembering that so many others, who have not, like ourselves, the happiness of being Christian, preserve of the past only the most bitter remembrance, and look forward to the future with the most agonizing terror, seeing only the horror and anguish that await them at the threshold of the tomb.

But there is a thought which this meditation suggests, and which I may usefully dwell on, every time I communicate.

Why does my first Communion appear to me so sweet, and why my last so powerful? Why?

Is it not because in the first my soul was yet adorned with all the loveliness of its virginal purity, my hands were innocent, my heart was loving? Is it not because in the last, completely detached from the world and the things of the world, I shall aspire only after heavenly joys?

But if, on the one hand, innocence

and love, and on the other, detachment from the world and the desire of heaven, suffice to render these two Communions so perfect, why do I not communicate every day as for the first and last time? Why do I not always, when I approach the Holy Table, strive to unite in myself the purity of a child, and the absolute renunciation of a man who is about to close his eyes to this world? Why is not every one of my Communions at once a tender pledge of love to Jesus Christ, as was my first, and an eternal adieu to the world, as will be my last? Why do I not always thank my Lord and my God as I thanked Him when, for the first time, He deigned to admit me to the Eucharist, as I shall thank Him when He will open heaven to me?

Oh! if it were thus, how happy should we be! All our Communions would be like our first and our last. Each would be for us our sweetest remembrance and our brightest hope. We would endeavour to become more and more Christian, that we might be worthy to communicate nearly every day, and then what a charm would be shed

over our whole existence! Almost every day we could say, Yesterday.... it is the sweetest remembrance of my life; I had the happiness of communicating. And to-morrow... it is my brightest hope; I shall again have the happiness of communicating. Amen.

THE PASSION AND THE EUCHARIST.

Constituit eam super excelsam terram....ut sugeret mel de petra, oleumque de saxo durissima.

He has set him upon high land....that he might suck honey out of the rock, and oil from the hardest stone. —*Deut.* xxxii. 13.

I.

The God of Israel has delivered His people from the slavery of Egypt, and was about to introduce them into the promised land.

Moses, on the point of closing his mission, celebrated by a canticle the wonders God had worked in favour of the Jews, and presenting to them a picture of the blessings they were to enjoy, he said to them: "God hath set His people on high land... that he might

suck honey out of the rock, and oil from the hardest stone."

We know that the Jewish nation was an image of the Christian people, and that all things happened to them in figure;* hence it is permitted us to seek in this verse of the canticle the hidden meaning, and discover in it the figure that is realized in the new alliance.

What, then, is this high land whither the Lord conducts me? . . . This high land, which is not heaven, and yet is far above all the things of this world—what can it point out to me, save the altar?

The altar: here I may suck honey from the rock, and oil from the hardest stone.

But here still all is mystery, and who will explain to me this language? Nothing is more delicious than oil and honey, yet how shall the rock produce honey, and how will oil flow from the stone? And first, what is this rock and this stone?

Ah! when I remember that on the rock of Calvary was immolated the

* 1 Cor. x. 11.

divine Victim for the sins of the world, that every day on the consecrated stone of the altar this immolation is renewed, I can easily understand that this rock and this stone symbolize the passion of our Saviour. And, indeed, what could be harder than the crown of thorns, the nails, the cross, the lance? . . . Even the stones were rent at the death of the Saviour.

But what honey shall I suck from this stone, what oil from this rock?

At the same time that the altar places before my eyes the holy Victim, it prepares for me a delicious festival: on the one hand faith shows me the body of Jesus Christ, bleeding, torn with blows, expiring on the altar as on the cross; on the other, she presents to me this same body, under the humble appearance of bread and wine. I taste this precious food, and it is sweeter than honey to my lips. I am inebriated with this sacred drink, and it gives more strength to my body than oil poured over my members. Divine Eucharist! Thou art this honey and this oil; and since the altar where Thou dwellest is

that where Jesus Christ is immolated, since Thou art given me as a memorial of His passion, since the last supper where Thou wast instituted was that at which Jesus bade a last adieu to His apostles before dying, am I not right in saying that when I consecrate Thee, or receive Thee from the altar, I draw honey from the rock, and oil from the hardest stone?

And to me the connection between the Passion and the Eucharist is real happiness and unutterable consolation.

For the passion is hard and bitter to me, both by the thought of my Saviour's sufferings and the sense of my crimes, which occasioned His torments, and also because of the rigor of the lessons I receive at the foot of the cross; and it is the sweetness of the Eucharist, the oil and honey drawn from this rock, that tempers for me this triple bitterness.

But the passion had been bitter to Jesus Christ, before being so to me: bitter because of the torments He endured, and the death which tore Him from the world; but bitter above all

by the foresight He had of the ingratitude of man. And before meditating the consolations the Eucharist presents to me, let me think of what Jesus Christ felt in instituting this Sacrament; representing to myself that He, as the head of His people, ascends first the high land of the altar, to draw honey from the rock, and oil from the hardest stone.

Thus in two words, the passion is bitter for Jesus Christ and for us, but the Eucharist, which is united to it, sweetens it for His heart and for ours.

Let us dwell on this thought, which, bringing together in our minds the passion and the Eucharist, will perhaps make us love both more tenderly: the passion, because we owe to it the Eucharist; the Eucharist, since to purchase the delights it offers us, the passion and death of a God were required.

II.

The Eucharist tempers the bitterness of the passion for the heart of Jesus.

The passion was doubtless bitter to our Lord, first, because of the fearful

anguish it made Him endure . . . But before suffering He instituted the Eucharist, and the Eucharist, on account of the ineffable happiness it procured the world, seemed to Him more replenished with sweetness than the passion was with bitterness.

The more we study Jesus Christ, the better shall we comprehend, that His divine relations with us may be told in these words: "To love us and render us happy." His love was the principle from which He starts, our happiness the end whither He tends; but between these terms, how long and painful the career—labours, sufferings, and death! It matters not: suffering is nothing to Him, because our happiness is every thing; His tears are nothing, provided ours be dried; His wounds are nothing, if thus ours be healed; His sorrows are nothing, if ours are by His consoled. And for every additional pang, He only asks of His Father an increase of happiness for us. In His thoughts, our happiness is ever joined with His sufferings, as their recompense and compensation.

His first tears at Bethlehem, the total poverty of His cradle, did not terrify Him; because He knew that before this little crib, round which successive generations should kneel, all hearts would dilate, all sorrows be soothed, all children would be joyful, and all mothers happy.

And so to the end of His life, the love He bears, will be ever the source of greater suffering for Him, and greater happiness for us. His greatest suffering was the Passion; our greatest happiness the Eucharist.

He desires, that in this Sacrament His body bruised, and His blood poured out, should be the source of our dearest delights. He desires it; and in the awful moment we might believe that the happiness He bestows on the world by giving it the Eucharist, augments His strength and courage. The institution of the Eucharist immediately precedes the Passion.

How I love to gaze in spirit on Jesus, when He leaves the cenacle to go to Calvary! How I love to hear Him after the last supper intone the joyous

hymn of thanksgiving before taking the path that led to Gethsemane! I imagine that during the cruel hours of the passion, He will often turn to the sweet effusions of the cenacle; that when His body shall be bruised and His blood poured out, He will more willingly consent to be bruised like the wheat, and pressed like the grape, since He has become, in advance, the bread that gives strength, and the wine that rejoices. And, finally, when He shall be expiring on the cross, He will love to think, that this Cross so hard, is to become the stone, whither Christian generations shall come to receive the oil and honey of the Eucharist—*mel de petra, oleumque de saxo durissimo.*

But what embitters the sufferings of our Saviour is the thought that death is about to tear Him from the earth,—that earth, which He has so much loved, not as those love it who seek only its vain pleasures and passing joys, but He has loved it because sent into it by His heavenly Father, He has gone about in it doing good:* He has loved it because

* Acts x. 38.

He has redeemed it with His blood; He has loved it because it has resounded with His divine word, and been witness to the wonders He has worked in it; He loves it because He knows how much it needs His divine presence in it: He truly has cause to say, "Doth bitter death separate in this manner—*siccine separas amara mors?*"*

This painful separation needs a comfort, and it is the Eucharist that offers it. Before death took Jesus Christ from the earth, the Eucharist had renewed and multiplied His life on our Altars; dying, He will not leave us orphans,† and it is the Eucharist which restores to us our divine Father. Every day, from one end of the world to the other, the priest repeats the word that he has received. "This is my body," and the body of Jesus Christ united to His soul and Divinity reappers in the midst of us. Nothing is wanting to the reality of the Eucharistic life, neither power nor love.

Oh! you who are blind, come to the Altar. Jesus passes on the Altar, as He

* 1 Kings xv. 32. † John xiv. 18.

did on the way to Jericho; He will open your eyes to light. Oh! you who are without energy and strength to walk in the way of virtue, come to the Altar: Jesus Christ is on the Altar, as He was at Capharnaum; He will say to you as to the paralytic, "Thy sins are forgiven thee, arise and walk." Poor sinful Magdalens, come to the Altar: Jesus is on the Altar, as He was in the house of Simon the leper; if you love like Magdalen, like Magdalen all will be forgiven you. What more shall I say? You who are agitated, tossed about by the storms of this world, the tempests of this life, take shelter near the Alar: Jesus is present on the Altar, as He was on the sea of Genesareth; here, also, He has but to say a word and the storm will be stilled.

The thought of these wonders, worked by the Eucharist, encourages Jesus Christ in His last hour; He will not refuse us the benefit of His death, since He can preserve us the blessing of His presence, and His tenderness will be fully satisfied: that tenderness which would not have been content to live

with us, without dying for us; nor to die for us, if thus He had ceased to live with us.

In fine, that which fills the measure of the bitterness of His passion is the ingratitude of men. Those whom He has most loved betray and deny Him; those whom He has loaded with benefits outrage and insult Him; those whom He is come to save nail Him to a cross. What ought He to have done for His vineyard that He has not done? He looked that it should bring forth good grapes, and it hath brought forth wild grapes.* But His divine eye rests on the ages to come: what a cruel foresight is added to present sorrow. His crown of thorns will not render the world less proud; the scourging will not make it less sensual, nor the cross less sinful. This is the cause of His bitter sadness. . . . . Who can deny, nevertheless, that, amid all this anguish, the thought of the Eucharist came to pour comfort into His soul? The Eucharist will, doubtless, make many ingrates, but it will inflame so many hearts; but it will

* Isai. v. 4.

awake so much devotion; but it will kindle in the bosom of the Church a furnace of love, which neither the indifference of some, nor the hatred of others, shall ever extinguish.

For one Judas who betrays our Lord, how many faithful, beloved disciples shall rest their heads with happiness on the bosom of their Master!

Yes, Jesus Christ formed for Himself, in the cenacle, a holy, chosen tribe, who having, it would seem, no country but the Altar, no food but the bread of the Altar, have also no love, no thought, no life, but for the God of the Altar. Ah! I wish, for a moment, to isolate myself from the world and all it contains, and forming one with this happy tribe of all nations, and countries, and tongues, and casting myself with them at the foot of the Altar, to collect in imagination all the acts of love, adoration, and respect that the Eucharist has awakened from the first Communion in the cenacle to the last Mass we have heard. . . . What clouds of incense have ascended to heaven! What joyous hymns have waked the envy of angels! How many

ardent prayers, how many foreheads lowly bowed, how many hands piously lifted up! How many blissful tears, worth more than all the joys of earth; what moments of felicity, which seem as if Heaven had descended into our hearts! How many happy days, of which we may say, "Better is one day in Thy courts above thousands!" * How many holy vigils, of which we proclaim, "Night is my light in the midst of my pleasures!"† How many holy desires, how many burning words, how many saintly actions inspired and consummated! This is the work of the Eucharist; and what is all this but the love that the divine Eucharist enkindles? As for me, I can say in a single sentence what most makes me love the Eucharist: it is, that it more than any thing else in the world has caused Jesus Christ to be loved. In heaven we shall see Him, we shall contemplate Him unveiled, we shall adore Him without the darkness of Faith; but in heaven shall we love Him more than we love Him, and shall love Him here below, in the Eucharist?

* Psalm lxxxiii. 11. † Ibid. cxxxviii. 11.

Ah! this ardent love of pious souls, and this active zeal of the faithful for holy works, this is the honey and oil Jesus draws from the hard rock of His passion—*Mel de petra, oleumque de saxo durissimo.*

III.

But is it for Jesus Christ only that the Eucharist tempers the bitterness of His passion? It sweetens it also for us.

For, first, how could our Christian hearts be insensible to the sufferings of our Saviour? The more He has deigned to endure for us, the more we are pressed to suffer for Him. But when we consider Him triumphing over death, and dividing Himself between the joys of heaven and the sweet repose of the tabernacle, our heart is consoled, and our thoughts rest joyfully on this peace of the Eucharist, contrasted with the horrors of Calvary.

In the second place, the passion brings to our remembrance the crimes we have committed, since Jesus suffered only to expiate them. We go over, in the bitterness of our soul, those sorrowful hours when Jesus was the Victim of

our crimes, and we were His tormentors, His executioners. But, then, what a solace to remember that we have in the Eucharist, by virtue both of the sacrifice and Sacrament, a means of regaining the friendship of God!

The Eucharist renews before us the sacrifice of the passion, no longer agonizing and bleeding, no longer as the hard consequence of sin, but now a pledge of love, a testament of peace, a bond of reconciliation.

Yes, the remembrance of our faults, inseparable from the thought of the passion, saddens and depresses us; but "if Jesus Christ was delivered up for our sins, He rose again for our justification;"* and every day in the Eucharist this miracle is renewed. This thought appeases our sorrow; and thus, as the sweet repose of Jesus in the tabernacle is the honey the Eucharist presents to me when the scenes of the passion rise on my view to break my heart, so divine grace, which this Sacrament confers, is the oil that heals my wounds when the cross reminds me of my offences.

* Rom. iv. 25.

But what most of all makes the passion seem hard to me, is the severe language it uses, and the painful duties it commands.

For what an example is that of a crucified God, and how arduous are the virtues He requires! An entire sacrifice of every thing, perfect renunciation, resignation in every pain, patience in every evil. Certainly this word is hard, and who shall hear it? . . . But, to soften its reign, the Eucharist will be to us as oil poured out —"*oleum effusum, nomen tuum.*"* Assuredly the Eucharist does not preach a doctrine different from that of the passion, it does not present other examples, teach other duties; but what the passion proclaims with an austere tone, the Eucharist insinuates with an accent full of charms —"*oleum effusum, nomen tuum.*"

The passion says, "If thou wilt be a disciple of Jesus Christ, take up thy cross daily and follow Him."† The Eucharist adds, "But if the burthen of the cross is too heavy, the weariness of the passion overpowering, come to me;

* Cant. i. 2. † Matt. xvi.

I will refresh you."* The passion says, "If thou wilt follow Christ, thou must sacrifice thy dearest inclinations; yea, and thy own life for His sake;"† but the Eucharist subjoins, "If you die to yourselves and to the world, you shall possess me and live by me, who am much more than the world,"‡ If you sacrifice to me your dearest affections, you shall receive from me a hundred fold:§ for I will love you more than father, mother, brother, sister, or spouse.

Hence the Eucharist persuades where the teachings of the passion might terrify; and we thank the Lord that He has rendered His cross so sweet and His passion so amiable by uniting them thus to the Eucharist, for it is true to say, that if we have courage to climb the rock of Calvary, and kneel on the supulchral stone that covers the bloody form of our Saviour, it is because this rock and this stone are become the altar, where it is given us to taste the honey

* Matt. xi. 28. † Luke xiv. 26.
‡ John vi. 57. § Matt. xix. 29.

and oil of the Eucharistic festival,—*mel de petra, oleumque de saxo durissimo.*

VI.

Lord, this is ever the sign by which we know Thee. Thou alone canst make us draw honey and oil from the flinty rock. Thou alone canst derive good from evil, joy from suffering; hence I abandon myself to Thee; I confide wholly in Thee.

From every stone that shall bruise my feet, from every rock that shall be a peril in my way, make me draw honey and oil; give me Thy Eucharist. If the devil wages fierce war against me, and if my exhausted members are about to sink under the struggle, pour out upon them Thy holy oil; give me Thy Eucharist; and if affliction oppresses me, and my soul is cast down by a bitter sadness, lift me up and nourish me with Thy divine honey; give me Thy Eucharist until the day when Thou shalt lead to that high land where there is no stone, nor rock, nor peril, nor struggle, nor bitterness, but where celestial beatitude is poured into every soul as a perfumed

oil, and they are fed with the honey of heavenly delights. Amen.

WHERE THE CHRISTIAN FINDS HIS GOD.

Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquorum, ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus.

As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God!—*Psalm* xli. 1.

I.

The royal prophet, who in his admirable canticles has celebrated in advance the mysteries of Christianity, does not forget the holiest and most august—the mystery of the Eucharist. Hence in several places of the Psalms we have seen that there was a figure and an anticipated eulogium of the Eucharist. This Sacrament David had in view when he cried out with transport, "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!"* and elsewhere: "The Lord ruleth me; I shall want for nothing; He hath set me in a place of pasture;"† and again: "Thou hast

* Psalm lxxxiii. 1. † Ibid. xxii. 1.

prepared a table for me . . . and the chalice that inebriates me, how goodly it is!"*

Nor can we deny that the Eucharist is referred to in the first six verses of the forty-first Psalm.

"As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God!

"My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?

"My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily, Where is thy God?

"These things I remembered and poured out my soul in me; for I shall go over into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God.

"With the voice of joy and praise; the noise of one feasting.

"Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou trouble me?"

We have heard these holy and mysterious words; let us resume them and meditate upon them.

* Psalm xxii. 5.

II.

The royal prophet compares the ardent desire that lifts the soul to God, to that which attracts the thirsty stag to the water brooks.

"As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so doth my soul pant after Thee, O God."

David employs this figure, because, surrounded as we are by the things of this life subject to the senses, we reach, as St. Paul says, a knowledge of invisible things only by the visible.* That which concerns the senses and material objects, we easily comprehend; but things relating to heaven and God, we find hard to understand.

All this is certainly true; but what a misery, what a humiliation for us! We comprehend that the thirsty stag desires the water of the fountain; we comprehend that the parched soil needs the dew of heaven; and we comprehend not, or with difficulty, the truths hidden under these symbols; we com-

* Rom. i. 20.

prehend with difficulty that our soul, more thirsty and panting than the stag, sighs after Thee, O God, the true living Water; or that our heart, more barren than the arid soil, sighs after Thee, my Lord, the true Dew of heaven. We comprehend that the poor captive chained in a darksome dungeon, pines for a ray of light, and we do not comprehend how our soul, in this prison of its body, pants after the light of God.

But, while this language of the prophet makes known to us our inferiority, at the same time it reveals our true greatness; for a drop of water satisfies the wants of the brute creation, and to fill the heart of man the divine immensity is required. O man, behold the measure of thy dignity: between the brute and thee there is the same distance as between a drop of water and infinitude. But let this revelation of thy greatness show thee its inseparable condition. Take care lest, deviating from thy sublime condition, thou attach thyself to a little gold, which is matter; to vain honours, which are smoke; to pleasure, which is dust and mire; and

thus cease to resemble thyself, becoming like the beast of the field; for if the stag pants only for the waters of the fountain, my soul, O God, is satisfied with nothing but Thyself.

III.

We have thus seen why the royal prophet employs this similitude: but is this desire of the soul, which inclines it thus to God, founded on a real want of our being, or is it only a noble fiction? Does it rest on the nature of our mind and heart, or is it not rather an invention of our soul? Oh! far from us such a thought. No, man has not invented it; he makes no such inventions. With a soul created to the image of God, he invents how to vilify and degrade it below the vilest creatures. With a heart created for eternal goods, he invents how to love what is passing and perishing. He invents nothing beyond this; and when he finds within himself the knowledge of God, the desire of God, the love of God, he cannot reject and cast aside these divine treasures as if they depended on himself, for they are

in him, but not of him. It is God Himself who has implanted them there, and confides them to him. He has implanted them to demand an account of them; He has confided them to him as a pledge of His love.

Yes, as God, in creating the body of man, submitted his senses to gross appetites, which material things can satisfy, so, in creating his heart, He subjected it to an immense desire—that of possessing the supreme and absolute good, which is no other than Himself. Sublime instinct of the heart, which is as irresistible as that of the senses, though with this difference, that the latter tends to degrade man to objects inferior to himself in dignity and nature, while the desire of his heart inclines him incessantly to a divine end, which elevates him above himself. My lips thirst for the water of the fountain that flows at my feet, but my soul sighs after Thee, O God, Who reignest above me. My senses covet some drops of a water without strength and life; but my soul thirsts for Thee, O God, Who art living,

and Who art strong, and Who givest strength and life.

IV.

David, having expressed the desire of the soul, tells us at once how it is to be satisfied: "When shall I come and appear before the face of God?"

When shall I come? for my soul, which sighs after God, gravitates incessantly towards Him; and my life is only a long journey, of which God shall be the term; an ocean, of which He is the harbour; an exile, of which He is the country.

When shall I come? But whither? To appear before His face. O sublime and consoling sentence in which the Scripture reveals to me my destiny and my end!

Reason alone could teach me to recognize in myself the innate desire that carries me to God, showing Him as the term of my destiny. But in what precisely consist this destiny and this happiness? Here faith comes to my aid, and making me see what human eye does not behold, hear what my ear

of flesh cannot take in, perceive what the mind does not understand, she opens to me the secrets of heaven. To appear before the face of God, to see Him as He is,* to penetrate His divine light by the light He communicates to us,†—this is supreme beatitude, this is our term, our destiny. For, as when the stag has quenched his thirst he no longer desires the water of the fountain, so when my understanding is filled with the God whom it sees, my heart with the God whom it loves, my soul shall have no other desire; she will say, "What have I in heaven? and, besides Thee, what do I desire upon earth?"‡

In these first verses of the psalm, David seems to follow the degrees of the ascension of soul to God; he includes them in three words: to desire God, to go to God, to contemplate God.

To desire God is the essential condition of the human heart; to go to God, its life; to contemplate God, its eternal beatitude. To desire God is the most noble prerogative of our nature; to go

* 1. John iii. 2. † Psalm xxxv. 10.
‡ Psalm lxxii. 25.

to God is the work of grace; to contemplate God is our state of glory. To desire God is the beginning of good; to go to God is the path of good; to contemplate God, the term of good.

Certainly, these thoughts are grand, they are consoling, and thus we draw waters with joy from the Saviour's fountain.

V.

But whence comes it, then, that David, after having poured our his soul, and risen on the wings of desire to the repose of contemplation, now suddenly changes his language, and cries out: "Tears are my bread night and day?"

What connection between what precedes and what follows? what relation between these fountains whence the soul draws water with joy, and those bitter tears which are become his food night and day? It is, answers the prophet king, because daily I hear them say around me, "Where is thy God?"

Oh! impious word, how many tears dost thou still draw from Christian eyes!

For, to the Christian, God is in all and everywhere; and in reality God is every thing for the soul. The soul breathes, God is its atmosphere; the soul feeds and drinks, God is its daily bread and its fountain of living water; the soul passes onward, God is its way; the soul thinks and comprehends, God is its truth; the soul speaks, God is its word; it loves, God is its love, God is its all; and therefore it is, that without regard for its worship, its adoration, its homages, the impious utter around it this word of blasphemy and derision: "Where is thy God—*ubi est Deus tuus?*"

The idolator can point to his gods, he shows me the brass and stone he adores: the man of the world knows his deity, he kneels before the material object of his passion, his cupidity, his pride; but neither the idolator nor the man of the world knows where to find the God of the Christian, therefore they insult Him, saying, "Where is thy God—*ubi est Deus tuus?*"

Where art Thou, O my God! where art Thou? Ah! rather let me ask where Thou art not. . . . Thou art

higher than the heavens which proclaim Thy glory.* If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I descend into hell, Thou art present. If I take to me the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost part of the deep, even there Thy hand shall lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me."†

Why then is it that to the impious Thou art ever invisible? I speak to him of Thy works, he contemplates them and denies their Maker. I tell him of Thy benefits, he accepts them, and denies the Benefactor. I interrogate his understanding, and he is become like senseless beasts.‡ I appeal to his heart, but it is in his corrupt heart the fool finds this reply, There is no God.§

In truth, I am powerless against his folly and crime; and if I wish to answer, I have no reply but tears. I weep during the day for the blasphemy of his days, and during the night over the shame of his nights; and my tears make me forget the bread of my days, and the rest of my nights.

* Psalm xviii. 2. † Ibid. cxxxviii. 8-10.

‡ Ibid. xxxi. 9. § Ibid, xiii. 1.

Ah! when my soul's desire of God, and the thought of its celestial beatitude, come to rejoice me, this word of the impious and the infidel, "Where is thy God?" fills my heart with anguish.

And, shall I confess it, O my God, not only does it afflict me, but, by ever sounding in my ear, it fatigues and disquiets my soul—*hæc recordatus sum et effudi in me animam meam.* My eyes are weakened like those of Ezechias, looking vainly upward,* while still it is said around me, Where is thy God? And I myself begin to say in my anguish, Lord, Lord, where art Thou, and where shall I find Thee?

VI.

But the royal prophet himself suggests the reply. "For," says he, "I will go over into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, the noise of one feasting. Why, then, should my soul be sorrowful, and why should it trouble me?"

Lord, I understand these words, and

* Isa. xxxviii. 14.

I thank Thee for them. This wonderful tabernacle, Thy dwelling among men, this voice of joy and praise, this sound of one feasting, what is implied by it all but the delights of the Eucharist? .... And if the Eucharist consoles me, who shall afflict me? If the Eucharist rejoices me, what shall trouble me? If I can gain the foot of the Eucharistic tabernacle, who shall dare say to me, Where is thy God?

The Eucharist is indeed the answer the Christian loves to give to this question of the impious. He points to the tabernacle and says, My God is there.

VII.

Doubtless the God whom we adore, a spirit infinite and immense, is present everywhere, and dwells in all places, by His essence and power; but for carnal man, this presence, which the mind alone recognizes and bears witness to, did not suffice for the designs and the bounty of God.

One of the most essential principles in the study of Christianity is, that man,

being composed of two substances, a soul and a body, God has willed that religion, which regulates our intercourse with Him, should be addressed equally to the mind and the senses.

Hence the Christian religion, which is the expression of this divine thought, has constantly preserved the mean between gross materialism, which gives every thing to the senses, and false spiritualism, which forgets them entirely. Its principal dogma is the Incarnation, where, while our mind adores an Infinite God, our eyes contemplate the divine flesh which is come to dwell amongst us. To this capital dogma is attached the entire economy of Christianity, so that, in studying this sublime doctrine, we find everywhere that part is for the soul and part for the senses.

For the spiritual nature of the soul is prepared the invisible grace that makes us friends of God; and for the senses there are the Sacraments, sensible and material signs of this invisible grace.

To the soul belong prayer, and all the sentiments that raise us to God; and

to the senses exterior worship; to the soul, to the understanding, to the heart, are addressed the metaphysical and moral proofs of religion; and, to the senses, the miracles that prove it in a sensible manner.

In like manner, then, as our mind perceives the Divine Immensity, so it was good that our senses should be able to show the precise spot where He dwells. It is the Eucharist that points out this spot, and looking at the Tabernacle, we say with truth, God is there. Hence it is only after having known God in the Divine Eucharist, that we say with David, "Why art thou sorrowful, O my soul, and why dost thou trouble me?" It is sweet to contemplate the immensity of God, present in all and everywhere, but how much sweeter to be able to say, when we lift our eyes to the Altar, "God is there;" then, indeed, our trouble is quieted, and our sadness disappears.

VIII.

Thus, properly speaking, it is in the Eucharist the Christian finds his God;

to invoke Him, he turns his eyes not so much to heaven as to the tabernacle; to approach Him, he draws near to the Altar, and consequently we may say that in some manner the life of a Christian is centred in the Eucharist.

We have expressed in three words the first verses of the psalm we are meditating: to desire God, to go to God, to appear before the face of God. The Christian heart loves to translate these words into the following: to desire the Eucharist, to attain to the participation of the Eucharist, to live and die in presence of the Eucharist.

They thus, indeed, comprise the life of a Christian. To desire the Eucharist is its principle; to attain to the participation of the Eucharist, all its labour and struggle; to persevere in the Eucharist, its consolation and joy.

To desire the Eucharist is the principle, the foundation of a Christian life; for how could we call ourselves Christians, if we did not desire to unite ourselves to Him who is the author and finisher of our faith? To attain to the participation of the Eucharist is all the

Christian's labour; for whither tend all the efforts of a pious soul, if not to render herself worthy of this divine sacrament? To reach this end, what high duties are imposed upon her, what sublime virtues required—humility, purity, charity, patience. On this subject the word of our Saviour is precise, and includes all: "He that eateth Me, the same shall live by Me."*

In fine, to persevere in the Eucharist is the happiness and consummation of the Christian life; for to the fervent soul who lives by the Eucharist, the yoke of the Lord is always sweet, and His burthen ever light.† She fears no evils, for the Lord is with her.‡ Walking thus in the presence of God, she makes her Communions, as it were, steps by which she rises from virtue to virtue until she gains His abode who dwells on the mount of Sion.§

IX.

It is truly then to the God of the

* John vi. 58. † Matt. xi. 30. ‡ Psalm. xxii. § Psalm lxxxiii. 8.

Eucharist that we may apply the first verses of our Psalm, and interpreting the secret thought of the prophet, we say with him:

"As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul sighs after Thee, O divine Eucharist!"

"My soul thirsteth for Thee, O fruitful and life-giving fountain, springing from the opened heart of Jesus, and gushing in divine floods on our altars! O sacred cup! O inebriating chalice, how lovely art Thou! O wine that makest virgins, when shall I possess thee—*quando veniam?*

"When shall my heart be so pure, so humble, so charitable, as to be permitted to become Thy tabernacle? When shall my eyes be turned away from all the vanities of the world, to rest only on Thee? When shall my life be so consummated, lost in Thee, that it may make but one with Thine, so that it may be no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me?"*

* Gal. ii. 20.

X.

Nevertheless, if, during the days of his earthly pilgrimage, the Christian is always certain of finding his God in the tabernacle, and if the Eucharist enables him to hear without disquietude this question of the impious, "Where is thy God?" far from us the thought that the Eucharist should make us forget Heaven, and hinder us from saying with David, "When shall I come and appear before the face of God? . . . . *quando veniam, et apparebo?*"

But the Eucharist teaches the Christian to know his God better; to love Him with more ardour; and to serve Him with greater perfection. This divine presence supports and rejoices him during the days of his weary exile; then, when the last one is come, he turns a last look of confidence on the divine Host, and cries out, "O Jesus, whom I here contemplate under these veils, grant at length that my burning thirst may be quenched; let me, beholding Thy divine countenance, enter into

the possession of Thy eternal beatitude." Amen.

Jesu quem velatum nunc aspicio.
Oro fiat illud quod tam sitio;
Ut, te revelata cernens facie,
Visu sim beatus tuæ gloriæ.

Jesu! whom for the present veiled I see,
What I so thirst for, oh, vouchsafe to me
That I may see thy countenance unfolding,
And may be blest thy glory in beholding

MARY AND THE EUCHARIST.

Sicut lilium inter spinas, sic amica mea inter filias.
Sicut malus inter ligna silvarum, sic dilectus meus inter filios.

As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.
As the apple-tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons.—*Cant.* ii. 2. 3.

I.

Blessed be this verse of the Canticle, which presents under these two images the two purest objects of our love.

As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters of Sion; and as the tree loaded with fruits among the dry trees of the forest, so is he whom I love among the sons.

What is this lily, and what this tree loaded with fruit?

And I can easily understand, and I hasten to say: The lily is Mary, and the tree loaded with fruits is Jesus in the sacrament of His love, in the divine Eucharist.

The Church is described to us under the figure of a garden inclosed—*hortus concluses**—a garden of which the terrestrial paradise was only a figure, and which is also, in its turn, an image of our paradise in heaven. Oh! then, what principally attracts my eyes in the garden of the Church, making me forget the entire world besides, is the lily and the tree loaded with fruits—Mary and the Eucharist.

Let others, inebriated with the vanities of the world, and dazzled by its false splendour, seek elsewhere their happiness; let them prefer the brilliancy of honours and the deceitfulness of pleasure, but for me, having breathed the perfume of the lily and tasted the fruits of the tree, I desire nothing in heaven and on earth but an humble and

* Cant. iv. 12,

hidden life, where the lily blooms and the tree presents to me its loaded branches. I wish to live and die between Mary and the Eucharist.

Yet, it is not that the world, to draw us and charm our hearts, does not also offer to us its flowers and its fruits; but it has only those lilies of which it is said, they bloom to-day, and to-morrow are cast into the oven.* It has only that fruit of which it is written, "What fruit had you then in those things, of which you are now ashamed?"† What wonder is it, then, that the sacred writer, comparing these flowers to thorns, and these fruits of sin to those of the wild trees of the forest, cries out: "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters of Sion, As the tree loaded with fruits among the dry trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the sons." The only lily that pleases him is Mary, and he knows of no fruit that is really delicious, save that of the Eucharist.

But it would be little to see the beauty of this figure, if we did not en-

* Matt. vi. 30. † Rom. vi. 21.

deavour to penetrate its hidden meaning.

Let us first consider separately the lily, which is Mary, and the fruit-burthened tree, which is the Eucharist; we will then seek to know why the sacred penman unites them together, and endeavour also to understand what is figured by this union.

II.

As the lily among thorns, so is Mary among the daughters of Sion. And does she not excel them all by her incomparable purity? "Many daughters have gathered together riches; but thou, O Mary! hast surpassed them all."* Many have followed Mary in the path of spotless virginity, many have acquired the fairness of the lily, but not one among them who has not been forced to say, "Behold I was conceived in iniquity, and in sins did my mother conceive me."† Mary alone was immaculate in her conception, immaculate in her birth, immaculate in her divine maternity, immaculate in

* Prov. xxxi. 29. † Ps. l. 7.

her life, immaculate in her death. Ah! as the lily among thorns, so is Mary among the daughters.

If the angel who announces to the world the mystery of the incarnation, goes at once to Mary, I am not surprised; she is pre-eminently the Virgin —*missus est angelus . . . ad virginem.** If, in the accomplishment of this great mystery, the Lord regards with complacency the humility of His handmaid,† why should we be astonished? Is she not the lily of the valley—*lilium convallium?* ‡ And too, if death, powerful over all, has no empire over Mary, I can understand it; for is she not the queen of that chaste and glorious generation, of which it is written, They triumph, crowned with an immortal diadem?§

Mary is then pre-eminently the lily. Jesus Christ, speaking of the lily of the field, says that it is more beautiful than Solomon in all his glory. I know but one lily lovelier than the lily of the fields: it is the lily of heaven, it is Mary.

* Luke i. 27.
† Luke i. 48. ‡ Cant. ii. 1. § Wisd. iv. 1.

III.

But while the sacred author compares Mary to the lily, he also with just reason assimilates the Eucharist to the tree loaded with fruits.

Jesus Christ is the fruit of the earth, He is the blessed fruit of the womb of Mary,* and He was the fruit that hung from the branches of the cross. But particularly in the Eucharist does he seem to realize this symbol. Precious tree, whose soil is the altar! It is of it it is written: "I am seated under the shadow of my beloved, and His fruit is sweet to my palate."† A shade always refreshing, and fruits ever sweet: is not this the Eucharist? In the tabernacle the thrice holy God conceals the splendour of His glory: He veils that radiant countenance on which the angels desire to gaze.‡ He is in darkness, He is shadow; but this darkness is like that of the night, in which the spouse loves to seek her beloved, and this shade brings ever peace and calm. When the fire of

* Luke i. 42.
† Cant. ii. 3
‡ 1 Pet. i. 12.

passions shall scorch me, or the deceiving splendour of the world dazzle my eyes, I will hasten to seat myself in this shade, and there I will taste the fruits of the tree. My parched and burning lips desire them, for they alone can quench my thirst; my hungry heart craves them, for they alone can satisfy its desires. Every day I eagerly grasp them, and every day I still demand them, but daily they are renewed and presented to my wishes; so that I cannot tell if I hunger most for them, or if they desire me with greater ardour. When I pass before the tree, it seems to borrow a voice to say to me, "If thou thirst, come to me and drink;"* and when it casts down into my bosom its divine fruits, again I hear its words: "My delight is to be with thee."† Therefore I prefer it to all the trees of the forest.

IV.

Already we have learned that if the sacred writer unites in his canticle the lily and the tree loaded with fruits, it is because both are sovereignly amiable.

* John vii. 37. † Prov. viii. 31.

But this reason alone does not satisfy me, and I ask again, why this connection? Is it not because between Mary and the Eucharist there exist intimate and marvellous relations? Yes, certainly. The Eucharist ever makes me think of Mary, and Mary in turn makes me love the Eucharist. The Eucharist reminds me of Mary, for this divine flesh that is presented to us in the Sacrament of love, was formed of the flesh of Mary. Before being born on our altars, He was born of Mary; the womb of Mary was the first tabernacle, her hands the first to touch Him; Mary was the first priest, the first communicant. The crib of Bethlehem, where Mary laid our infant God, was our first altar; the swaddling-clothes our first altar cloths. How then can I approach the Eucharist without thinking of her who has given me all, taught me all concerning the Eucharist? Ah! I will ask her to give me before all—to teach me, in preference to every knowledge, the divine science of love.

O Mary, when I see you press to your heart, and in your maternal arms,

the Babe I love, I envy your happiness. I envy the sweet moments you spent with Him; I envy those divine caresses; I envy all you did to please Him; and all this seems to me a happiness far beyond my reach. Every morning I wash my hands at the foot of the Altar, and my hands are never sufficiently pure; every morning I confess my sins and endeavour to purify my heart, but my heart is always defiled; every morning I bring to my lips the tenderest words to address Him, and my words are always cold: Mary alone can teach me these things, for she is no stranger to the delights of the Eucharist. When, after the Saviour's ascension, she went to live with St. John, did she not receive daily from the Apostle her divine Son in the Eucharist? O God, what fervent Communions! It is, indeed my Son, she says! I know Him in the breaking of bread;* He whom I carried nine months in my womb; He whom I nourished with my milk and warmed with my most tender caresses. Yes, it is He, answers the beloved disciple; I

* Luke xxiv. 35.

too recognize Him on whose bosom I have loved to repose.

Blessed disciple! he too had chosen his abode between the lily and the tree burthened with fruit; between Mary and the Eucharist. It is the privilege of John I have desired.

Oh! pure lily, oh! divine tree, you never blossom or bear fruit one without the other; my heart shall not separate you. You shall be as two limits of my life, my horizon shall extend from one to the other; and when my love shall languish and my heart fear its weakness, lest it fail, I will say with the Spouse in the Canticles, Stay me up with thy flowers and thy fruits;* and, strong with this support, I shall love Thee more.

V.

But if I love Thee thus ardently, I should prove it by more than vain words. If Mary and the Eucharist are the dearest delights of my heart, they should govern my conduct; I should always

* Cant. ii. 5.

show forth in myself the virtues they have taught me.

To learn these virtues I have only to consult the emblems that I meditate; for the lily teaches me purity, and the tree loaded with fruit preaches charity. If I love Mary, I must be pure; and if I love the Eucharist, I should become like it, all to all.

I live, O Lord, in the midst of a world that offends and insults Thee; around me impure scenes strike my eyes; the passions are all alive, innocence shudders, and thought, affection, and desire, wander far from Thee. Ah! amid all these dangers, these scandals, these woes, I will recur to the thought of Mary; I will endeavour to retrace her image in my life, and my heart shall remain pure as a lily among thorns.

But as Mary gave birth to the God of the Eucharist, so purity of heart should be for me the principle of a charity, active, unwearied, spiritual and material. I will have good examples for all those with whom I meet, and my conversations shall be as the words of those who evangelize peace and bring glad

tidings of good things.* No one among my brethren shall be sad, and I not sad with him; no one shall suffer, and I not bear with him;† no one be poor, and I not open my hand to administer relief. Thus I will endeavour to become like the tree loaded with fruit, to give myself all to all, as Jesus does in the Eucharist, that, uniting in myself purity and charity, I may hope to please Thee, O my God, who delightest among lilies, and givest place in thy garden only to good trees loaded with good fruits.

May we, by the fervent practice of these two, deserve to hear the Lord say to us also, "As the lily among thorns, and as the tree loaded with fruit is to the dry trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the children of men." Amen.

* Rom. x. 15. † 2 Cor. xi. 29.

Printed by Richardson and Son, Derby.

The Child's First Prayer Book. By a Mother. Demy 18mo, large type, 3d.

What Every Christian Must Know. —Laws of God, and of the Church.— —Confession.—Holy Communion.—Rule of Life. — Confirmation. — Sins. — Conscience. By the Rev. J. Furniss, C.S.S.R. Permissu Superiorum. Royal 32mo. printed cover, 1d.

This new edition of "What every Christian must Know," contains numerous alterations and revisions, and several important subjects which were not in the former edition.

Manual of Prayers Before, During, and after Mass, on Sundays and Holidays, chiefly intended for the use of Poor schools. Royal 32mo. Imprimatur. R. B. Roskell, Bishop of Nottingham. 1d.

A Few Sweet Flowers collected from St. Teresa. Translated from the Spanish, by the Rev. Canon Dalton, fine cloth, gilt, 1s.

Help to Devotion; a Collection of one Hundred Novenas in Honour of God and of His Blessed Saints. By the Very Rev. Father John Baptist Pagani. New Edition, Permissu Superiorum. 1s. 6d.

Visits to the Most Holy Sacrament. Translated from the Italian of the Very Rev. J. B. Pagani, Provincial of the Order of Charity in England. New Edition. Permissu Superiorium. 1s. 6d.